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By COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM

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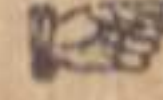
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THE CONSPIRATORS:

OR,

THE ISLAND LEAGUE.

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BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING DIME NOVELS:

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NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
98 WILLIAM STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1874, by
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THE CONSPIRATORS.

CHAPTER I.

THE FLIGHT.

It was midnight, and the beautiful harbor of Havana lay in deep repose, excepting now and then the glassy waters were disturbed by a swiftly flying guard-boat, ever on the alert to discover mischief and danger lurking beneath the cloak of darkness.

Here and there, dotting the glassy surface of the bay, were vessels of all descriptions at anchor, from the majestic ship of war, the trading brig, and coffee dragger to the pleasure yacht, chebeca boat, and fishing smack, while the gleam from their watch-lights danced in every direction over the waters which were just commencing to ripple beneath a gentle breeze.

Above the highest masts towered the frowning misery-holding fortress *El Moro*, looking down in watchful menace upon the city and harbor, and grandly magnificent even in its gloom.

Landward, twinkled a thousand lights from Havana, with now and then a blaze of fiery splendor from some lordly mansion where pleasure reigned supreme, and its occupants were chasing away the hours with flying feet, while the strains of gay music would float seaward, soothing, as with a lullaby, some poor seaman in his rude couch, as his wooden home gently rocked him to sleep.

"Boat ahoy! what boat is that?" suddenly hailed a stern voice from the quarter-deck of a large man-of-war, whose hull and rig at once indicated her nationality as an American.

"Dart!" was the simple answer to the challenge, and the next instant a barge came alongside the vessel and half a dozen young officers, who had been to some entertainment on shore, ascended quickly to the deck.

"Well, Guy, you missed it, for never did I enjoy myself more," said a young lieutenant, walking aft, and addressing his brother officer who had charge of the deck.

"Yes, Grayson; I doubtless would have enjoyed myself; but then I felt not in the mood for pleasure to-night," answered the lieutenant, and his friend replied:

"And I am not in the mood for sleeping, so will join you awhile in your lonely watch."

"Thank you, Grayson; but though with pleasure accepting your society, I must disclaim any approach to the slander of loneliness, for see, though it is midnight, and the harbor, fortress and city appear in repose, there is much to catch the eye and hold one's thoughts. No; I am never lonely on the quarter-deck."

"At any rate I will keep you company for awhile; and behold, I bring another friend, for yonder rises the moon from behind the hills, to cheer us with her presence, and—Ha! what was that shot for?"

The flash and report of a gun had suddenly interrupted the words of the young lieutenant, and like magic the harbor was alive with flashing lights from many an armed deck.

"By Heaven! 'tis the Governor's pleasure yacht running out—Ha! there goes a challenge from a guard-boat," cried Guy Granger, and immediately there broke forth in stern tones in Spanish—coming from a distance of three hundred fathoms up the harbor.

"Ahoy, the Nina!"

No answer came from on board the yacht, and again the officer of the guard-boat hailed:

"Luff! luff, I say! *Madre de Dios*, you'll be into us!" and the next instant there was heard a loud cry of terror, a few straggling musket-shots, a crashing of timbers, and on swept the beautiful vessel, leaving death and destruction behind her.

"There is either a most awkward helmsman aboard yonder yacht, or she has been cut out and is being run away with by some band of daring fellows," said Guy Granger as he turned his night-glass upon the flying vessel, which could now be distinctly seen in the moonlight, to be a long, narrow schooner setting low in the water, and with masts that raked far aft, and were bending beneath the pressure of canvas they upheld.

for with the wind blowing a nine-knot breeze from the landward, and striking the yacht upon her starboard quarter, every sail was drawing full.

Four small brass guns were discernible upon the decks, one upon either broadside, and one forward and aft, while around them stood their crew of half a dozen men to each piece.

Upon the quarter-deck could be seen but two persons, a tall man muffled in a heavy cloak, and pacing the deck fore and aft with a quick, nervous tread, while his glance constantly ranged over the harbor, shipping and fortress.

The other was a young man as well as could be discovered in the moonlight, under twenty, with a dark face, beardless, and black flowing hair that fell upon his shoulders.

He was dressed in a suit of dark clothing, and wore a naval cap, the visor of which failed to hide his flashing eyes, as with compressed lip and stern brow, he held the wheel firmly in his grasp and kept his gaze riveted on his course ahead.

"That fellow knows what he is about; yet it is madness for him to think he can escape from this armed harbor; but, Granger, do you intend to check him?" asked Grayson Trevor of his brother officer.

"No, let the Governor look after his own harbor; by heaven! the fellow deserves success for his boldness—see there!" and as the young officer spoke the sharp bows of the schooner were seen to come up quickly, and the next instant struck with terrific force another guard-boat that had attempted to cross his path.

"He's death on guard-boats. Forward there! lower the third cutter into the water, and pick up those drowning men," called out Lieutenant Granger, and he once more bent his gaze upon the schooner, which, checked but a second by her destruction of the guard-boat, still stood on, heading seaward.

The whole harbor was now aroused, and with the numerous lights that were burning, was as bright as day almost, and all eyes were turned upon the daring vessel, as she sped like the wind through the crowded port, now luffing up quickly, now falling off rapidly, to escape some vessel in her course.

The sailing crew stood ready fore and aft to ease off or haul in on the sheets, at a gesture from the young helmsman;

others stood ready at the guns, and all seemed determined not to be taken, although they knew their greatest danger was yet to come, when the fortress and the Spanish vessels of war could bring their guns to bear upon them as they flew seaward, for in the then crowded harbor they dare not fire for fear of doing damage to other shipping.

But ten minutes had now elapsed since the first alarm, and by this time the saucy schooner, with her daring crew, had run down as far as the anchorage of the American brig of war, Dart, upon the decks of which now stood every officer and man, intently watching her night flight through the dangers with which she was surrounded.

"Luff! luff! and pass to leeward!" suddenly cried Guy Granger, springing, trumpet in hand, upon the bulwarks.

"Ho! the yacht! Luff, and go to the leeward!" he cried again, in Spanish, as he saw the sharp bows of the flying vessel almost upon him, and feared she might collide with the brig, did he attempt to pass to windward.

"Ay, ay, sir! luff it is!" answered a distinct and firm voice, from the yacht, and as he spoke, in perfect English, the young helmsman waved his hand toward the American lieutenant.

The next instant the graceful bows fell off rapidly, and then, bracing up sharp again, passed under the lee of the brig, which for an instant took the wind out of the full sails and checked slightly her headway, thereby giving all on board the Dart a fair view of the yacht and her daring crew.

The decks were in perfect order, the crew calm, silent, and determined, while the elderly man who paced to and fro, stopped for an instant and turned his gaze earnestly upon the brig, and said something in a low tone to the helmsman, who glanced quickly over the proportions of the American vessel, and by a half turn of his wheel brought the yacht still closer.

"From what do you fly?" cried Guy Granger, addressing the helmsman, as he came on a line with the brig's quarter-deck.

"From the gloom of yon prison," sternly replied the

youth, pointing with his right hand to the frowning heights of the Moro above them.

"Ay, from what, as free Americans, you can appreciate—from *Death, Dishonor and Tyranny*, hurled by Spain upon a Cuban patriot!" returned fiercely the gray-haired man, as he raised his clenched fist, and shook it menacingly at the Moro.

"Silence!" called out Guy Granger to his crew, for, having poken in pure English, the American seamen had caught the meaning of the replies of the old Patriot and the helmsman, and were about to cheer his sentiments, forgetting for the instant that their vessel lay in a Spanish port.

Then, turning to the officers around him, as the yacht once more caught the full force of the wind, and bent to it madly, he continued:

"That is some state prisoner whose friends have thus aided his escape; but I fear me, he has but escaped from a dungeon to go down to a watery grave, for in a few moments the guns of the Moro will open upon him."

"Yes, and yonder comes a fleet hound upon the yacht's track," Grayson Trevor, pointing as he spoke up the harbor, where the tall, tapering masts of an armed cutter could be seen coming down rapidly upon the wind, under foresail and mainsail thrown wing and wing.

"Yes; 'tis the *Magenta*, and the swiftest vessel in the Spanish service; but see, now she has jibed her foresail over, as she changes her course, and they are setting her stay-sail, jibs, and topsails. Yes, if the yacht escapes the Moro's iron hail, she'll have a Tartar at her heels," and Guy Granger once more turned his glass upon the flying vessel, which was now half a mile away, and making all haste for the open sea.

As he gazed, a strange expression rested upon his face, for, though he had disguised it to his officers, he well knew who it was that had so boldly run off with the Governor-General's yacht.

CHAPTER II.

THE PURSUIT.

Boom! boom! boom! and the deep-mouthed guns of the Moro broke forth angrily upon the night air, awaking many a sleeping citizen, reverberating through the city's deserted streets, startling the echoes far away, and rolling like muffled thunder, far out over the waters of the gulf.

Boom! boom! and still the guns pealed forth, sending their iron hail after the daring little yacht, which so boldly attempted to escape in the face of their belching anger and fury.

"Yonder yacht bears a charmed life," cried Grayson Trevor, excitedly, as with all the officers and crew of the Dart he eagerly gazed upon the receding vessel, which, unhurt by the fire of the Moro, still stood on.

"By Jove, they've euchered the Moro there; for see, the helmsman keeps so close under the hights, the guns can not be depressed to bear upon him," answered Guy Granger, and all looked with interest and anxiety upon the flying craft, and dreaded each instant to see her struck by an iron shot, for the boldness of the crew of the little vessel, and their evident flight from Spanish tyranny, had won the deepest sympathy from the Americans on board the Dart.

So interested were all in watching the effect of the fire from the Moro, that they had forgotten the existence of the cutter they had observed coming down in chase of her, until suddenly they were startled by a rushing sound, as if of the wings of a thousand birds, and the next instant a cloud of canvas hovered above their quarter-deck, to windward of the brig, and shaded them from the moonlight, as the Magenta swept majestically and swiftly by.

"Ahoy, the Dart!" called out the commander of the Spanish cutter, as she rushed by.

"Ay, ay, sir!" answered Lieutenant Granger.

"What officers were on the yacht's decks?"

"I saw but one other besides the helmsman."

"Why did you not check them as they went by?" angrily called out the Spaniard.

"Let Spaniards do Spain's dirty work, not Americans!" answered Guy, his face flushing with anger at the tones of the cutter's commander.

The reply of the Spaniard was unheard, as the cutter, three times the size of the yacht, but a beautiful vessel and swift sailer, rushed on, her officers crowding sail after sail, in their desire to overtake the daring craft a mile or more ahead of them.

"Now, my little yacht, you are under two fires, for yonder opens the cutter," cried Guy, as, with glass in hand, he eagerly watched the shots poured from the bow-guns of the Magenta, as soon as she had cleared the shipping in the harbor.

Then commenced a terrific fire upon the devoted vessel, poured from fortress and cutter, but on she swept, each moment increasing her speed as the breeze freshened, and laying far over with the tremendous pressure on her sails.

Ahead, astern, around and over her fell the iron messengers of death; but, as if she bore a charmed existence, no shot touched her beautiful deck, or cut a single rope or spar, and all who watched her progress began to believe that she would run unhurt through the gantlet of iron hail.

Upon her decks still reigned the same silent determination amid the crew; the restless man with the gray hair and stern face still paced the decks, while the young helmsman held his wheel with the same coolness, although the guns of the Moro sent shot upon shot after his swiftly-flying craft.

"Caramba! but that liked to have taken your head off, Ralph," suddenly cried the man in the cloak, turning to the helmsman, as a shell from the Moro passed but a few feet from the youth.

"True, father; but the *garrote* will be more certain, if we are taken," answered the youth, in a significant tone.

"*Verdad, verdad, Ralph; but we must not be taken,*" sternly answered the old man.

"No, father; we must not be taken—*alive*;" he added the last word after a pause.

"And we will not; but, do you know, I now believe we

will escape? You see, the cutter does not gain upon us, and the Moro's guns are fired wildly. It was a lucky thought of yours Ralph, selecting this yacht for my escape, for none other could hope to keep ahead of the swift Magenta."

"Yes, the dear little Nina shows a clean pair of heels to the cutter— Ha! that was a bad shot!" cried the youth, suddenly, as a shot from the Moro cut through the bulwarks and hurled half a dozen bleeding forms to the deck.

"*Muerte de Dios!* I have feared it all along. Ha! *mucho mal!*" continued the patriot, as another shot cut away the foretop-mast of the yacht, leaving the sail and yard dangling by the rigging.

"Into the rigging, there, and clear away the wreck!" cried the youth, in stern tones, to the crew, and the next minute he called out, in a lower voice:

"Pedro, have those dead and dying men carried below."

"Ay, ay, Senor Ralph!" answered a tall and powerfully-built man, instantly repeating the order; and then walking aft toward the helm, he said:

"Shall I aid you with the wheel?"

"No, good Pedro; she steers as gently as a lady's row boat, and I can easily manage her alone."

"Yes; I offered even my slight aid, Pedro, but Ralph refused it; but what think you of our chances?" and casting his cloak upon the deck, an act that displayed that his right arm was missing, the aged Patriot walked aft near his son, for the young helmsman stood in that relationship to him.

"I believe we will escape, Senor Chief," answered the man addressed as Pedro, politely raising the broad sombrero that shaded his face, and displaying a dark, swarthy countenance, strangely bold and determined.

"*Madre de Dios* grant it! But yonder enemy comes on apace," answered the patriot.

"Ay, and yonder comes an enemy to both. By Heaven! I thought it was the smoke from the Moro's guns. Forward, there, my men—stand ready all of you to shorten sail!" cried the youth, and his ringing voice made every man spring to his post, while one and all glanced astern to note the cause of his strange order.

Hitherto concealed by the hights and also blended with

the smoke of the city, was a mass of dark clouds, rushing heavenward with a speed that proved a hurricane was hurrying them on, to cover the moonlit skies rapidly with their gloom.

"*El huracan! el huracan!*" was the cry from the yacht's decks as the crew caught sight of the approaching storm, while the young helmsman quickly gave a few hurried orders, and away the fleet vessel sped before the wind, still followed by the iron shots from the fortress and the cutter.

"By my life! but she threatens to run under, Ralph!" said the Patriot, addressing his son, with some anxiety in his tones, as he noted how the bows of the schooner were buried in the foam made by her great speed.

"No fear, father; and see, yonder comes the hurricane with tremendous force; and behold, it sweeps upon the Moro."

"Ay, and the cutter's crew are not aware of its approach," cried Pedro.

"*Nombre de Dios!* but they'll go down. Hold, Ralph! If the hurricane makes a wreck of the cutter, we must not see her crew perish;" and the Patriot laid his left and only arm firmly upon the wheel.

"No, father, though 'twere putting our heads in the lion's mouth to save their lives."

"True, boy; but humanity demands it of us."

It was now evident that the approach of the hurricane was not observed upon the cutter, so anxiously were all on board watching the flight of the yacht and the effect of their shots upon her.

Also, the Moro's light yet hid the thundering storm from the cutter's decks, which, being much nearer under the land, the inky clouds were not visible, while the yacht being further out to sea, and her crew constantly glancing astern, the approaching gale was now discussed, and all was rapidly made ready to receive it.

"Lower away the mainsail! drop the foresail, and close reef; lively, men, for your lives are at stake; let fly the maintopsail! Well done, Pedro, strip her of all but her foresail and jib;" and the orders of the young helmsman were given in a clear, ringing voice that reached every ear.

In two minutes' time the yacht was ready to meet the

storm, and under greatly-reduced sail was standing on directly before the gale, while the cutter, still crowded with clouds of snowy duck, rushed on in pursuit, and rapidly gained upon the chase.

"God in Heaven help them! See, the storm has struck them!" cried the Patriot, suddenly, as a pall of gloom, a wall of waters, and an avalanche of wind descended like lightning upon the fated vessel, tearing her wings of canvas into threads, crashing through her oaken bulwarks, and snapping her masts like sticks, while the death-shrieks of her crew mingled with the howl of the hurricane.

CHAPTER III

THE WRECK.

"AND now we must meet it; forward there! Stand ready to let fly all; here, Pedro, help me with the helm, for I must lay her to," cried the young helmsman quickly, and the next instant, taking advantage of a passing wave, the helm was put hard down and the bows of the graceful craft swept up into the wind, and lay head on to meet the roaring, plunging tempest, wildly rushing upon her.

"Strip her of every rag! lash yourselves, all!" cried the same cool tones of the helmsman, and then the wild warfare of wind and sea was upon them, lifting the little vessel high upon its tempest-tossed bosom, and then launching it furiously forward to struggle in the vortex of destruction.

"Life of life! would Heaven see us perish?" cried the old Patriot, as with his one hand he clung closely to the wheel.

"No! she rides it nobly; ha! behold the cutter!" shrieked the helmsman, so that his voice might be heard above the storm, and as he spoke he pointed across the raging waters to where the dark hull of the cutter, dismantled and unmanageable, rolled fearfully in the mad waves, and, but a few fathoms distant, was being borne forward.

Suddenly the gloom was lit up by a bright flash, and from

the wreck came the boom of a heavy gun, followed a second after by another.

"Yes, they are crying for help from Heaven; but they cry in vain, for no vessel will put out in the storm to aid them," said Pedro.

"No, unless *we* aid them their doom is sealed."

"Then, father, I will do all I can, for surely their cry is imploring; what say you?"

"You have a noble heart, Ralph; do all you can," answered the Patriot, and as he spoke another gun, and another, pleaded for succor from the wreck, which presenting a higher surface to the wind than the yacht, had been driven past before the gale.

"Pedro, go forward and set the jib, for that will be all she can stand," said Ralph, and after a short delay the bows of the yacht came round, the wind caught the canvas, and away darted the little vessel before the gale, and directly in the track of the dismantled cutter.

Soon, through the gloom, flashed forth another gun for help, and directly ahead loomed up the wreck.

"Keep to the starboard of her; steady—so!" cried Ralph, and leaping into the rigging, as he relinquished the helm to Pedro, he cried:

"Ho! the cutter!"

"Ay, ay," answered the voice of her commander, who was lashed to the wheel of his vessel.

"If you are in danger of going down, I will keep near to be of service."

"Will you? I had not expected it of you. Yes, I have lost one-third of my crew overboard; my sticks are blown out, and the vessel is rapidly filling," returned the Spaniard, through his trumpet.

"Then I will keep near you until the gale blows over, and then take you aboard," generously returned Ralph.

"Do so, and you may save your neck for cutting out the Governor's yacht."

Ralph returned no answer to the insulting remark of the Spaniard, but gave orders to keep the wreck well in sight, for he did not care to stand away, for fear he should lose it in the gloom.

Thus an hour passed, and the gale abated somewhat; but suddenly a gun was fired from the wreck, and Ralph instantly stood away for her, and coming under her stern was hailed by her commander with:

"We are settling rapidly, and will go down in half an hour."

"Then take to your boats and come aboard," cried Ralph.

"We have not a single boat, as all were washed away when the storm struck us," answered the Spaniard.

"Ay, ay; keep up hope, and we'll send the boats after you," responded Ralph; and then calling to his crew, he said:

"Men, I know I ask you to save your enemies; but they are worse foes of my father and myself, and yet we would not see them die before our eyes.

"Who will man the boats?"

With a cheer, the entire crew of twenty men sprung forward as volunteers, and from them Pedro designated fourteen as sufficient to man the two life-boats belonging to the yacht, and with great danger lowered them into the water, for the sea was yet raging with fury.

Another cheer came from the brave crew, as with strong arms they boldly pulled away and headed for the cutter, which was distant but a cable's length to leeward of the yacht.

"Come up under my lee," cried the Spanish commander to the coxswains in the stern of the boat and in the darkness they were lost to the sight of Ralph and his father, who had eagerly watched their dangerous progress.

Ten minutes or more passed, and then from the side of the wreck shot forth the two boats, and with steady, rapid strokes came toward the schooner.

"Here, father, hold the wheel steady, and Pedro and myself will throw them a line;" and leaving the Patriot at the helm, Ralph sprung forward, and with great dexterity threw a stout rope into the hands of a man standing up in the bow.

The next instant the boats were alongside, and the Spaniards clambered upon the yacht's deck, and ere he was

aware of treachery the young helmsman was felled by a single blow from the commander of the cutter, while Pedro was also seized and held firmly.

"At them, Spaniards, and cut them down if they resist!" cried the officer of the cutter, and unmindful of danger, the yacht's crew were soon confronted by the overwhelming numbers of their adversaries, though not until a few upon each side had been slain.

"Ha! that's your game, you ignoble wretches!" cried the old Patriot, as releasing his hold upon the wheel, he drew a short sword and sprung toward the Spanish officer.

But a dozen men threw themselves upon him, and he was overpowered, just as a Spaniard, in obedience to an order from his officer, took the helm and let the yacht fall off once more before the wind.

At the same time Ralph, who had been stunned by the blow that had felled him to the deck, returned to consciousness, and observing that his enemies held the yacht, cried:

"Is this treachery worthy of an officer of Spain?"

"Ay is it, my young rebel, for in dealing with traitors any act is fair," returned the Spaniard, with a harsh laugh.

"The men! my crew that went in the boats to save you? where are they?"

"Some of them are at the bottom of the ocean by this time; the others are my prisoners. Helmsman, let her come round, and now that the wind is dying away we will beat back to the harbor; ha! yonder goes my beautiful vessel, lost by this night's work;" and the Spaniard pointed to the wreck, above the bulwarks of which suddenly burst a bright red flame.

"You have fired her then?" said Ralph, quietly.

"Yes, for she could not have floated much longer," and the commander of the cutter watched the flames as each second they burst more brilliantly forth, and shedding a lurid, wild glare over the ocean, shone brightly upon the faces of those on the yacht's deck.

Turning suddenly, the eye of the Spaniard fell upon the tall form of the one-armed Patriot, and with a start, he cried:

"By the devil! is it you? El Miralda, the Conspirator, that has thus boldly attempted escape?"

"Ay, Captain Eugenio Baril, I am El Miralda, the Conspirator chief!" sternly answered the Cuban, turning a withering glance upon the man before him, whose treachery had taken the yacht.

"And I'll be sworn thy son has been the one to plot thy daring escape—"

"So have I, Don Baril, and but for thy treachery I would have placed my father beyond the reach of Spanish tyranny," indignantly returned Ralph.

"Beshrew me, but you are a precious pair of traitors. Escape from the Moro's dungeon I believed not possible; but here you are, and unless this yacht swamp I'll have you chained once more in the gloomy old fortress, and El Miralda, thy boy shall bear thee company this time, for he is not to be trusted abroad, I see," and with a jeering laugh the Spaniard walked forward to give some order regarding the management of the vessel, while Ralph, turning to the brave volunteers who had gone to the rescue of the crew of the cutter, said quietly:

"Well, Delos, how were you thus surprised?"

"Brave senor, we suspected no treachery from drowning men, whose lives we would save, and ere we were aware we were seized and bound, while those who resisted were hurled into the sea," and the poor coxswain bent his head in sorrow at the fate of his companions.

"*Madre de Dios*, but Spaniards shall rue this day!" muttered Ralph, between his shut teeth, as he turned away and bent his eyes over the lurid waters toward the burning cutter.

"You appear to like the light, senors, of my burning ship. Here, boatswain, put El Miralda and his son in irons and confine them below. Hold! let Don Pedro also keep them company, for had it not been for his treachery the traitors would never have seized the yacht," and with bitter denunciations, Captain Eugenio Baril walked aft, while his orders were immediately obeyed, and the Conspirator chief and his friends were instantly ironed and sent below decks, just as a terrific explosion shook the sea, as the cutter was

blown into a thousand atoms, which, after flying heavenward in rapid flight, fell with a seething hiss into the mad waters, and sinking, left the ocean in impenetrable gloom, while a hush like death fell upon the swarthy crew that had so treacherously taken possession of the yacht.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONSPIRATORS' ISLAND.

To inform the reader more fully regarding the circumstances related in the foregoing chapters, I must go back to a year previous to the flight of the yacht *Nina* from beneath the guns of the formidable Moro Castle, one of Spain's pet prisons, as well as a so-considered, impregnable fortress, which, Argus-eyed, watches threateningly over the harbor of Havana.

One pleasant afternoon in the year 18— two persons were standing upon a bold point of land, a rocky arm as it were, jutting out into the open ocean, and then circling landward again, like the curve of an elbow, forming a sheltered cove, or bay, nestling in the bosom of the land.

From the standpoint of the two persons referred to, a broad and extensive view could be obtained; directly in their front, for they were gazing seaward, rolled the blue waves of the ocean for many a mile, while behind them was a barren waste for miles, and then a fertile valley, with beyond, in the distance, a range of mountains, blue and hazy as they towered high in air and sheltered the vales at their base.

To the right was the little bay, a third of a mile in length, and of almost an equal width, and therein the waters lay undisturbed by the elements that raged without; for the rocky arm that sheltered the placid basin, was high enough to prevent even the top-masts of a man-of-war from being observed over its summit from seaward.

From landward a clear creek flowed into the basin, the mouth of which was zig-zag, and densely overgrown were the banks with luxuriant foliage.

The outlet, or entrance, to the bay was through a narrow and circuitous gorge in the rocks, opening into the ocean, and through which only a most skillful pilot could run a vessel, even in quiet weather.

Another glance into the bay displayed a number of humble huts, or cabins, built along the white beach near the mouth of the creek, while in their front were children at play, or boldly launching their miniature skiffs upon the blue waters of the basin.

Altogether it was a striking and strange picture, and the two persons who gazed thereon were evidently impressed thereby.

The one was a tall and majestic man, with a grim, dark face and eagle eye, and a mouth upon which rested daring and determination, visible beneath a heavy gray mustache; dressed in a white flannel suit and broad sombrero, such as are worn in Mexico, his appearance was most striking, and presented a martial bearing in spite of his *neglige* attire, while the empty sleeve upon his right side indicated the loss of the right arm, and furthermore convinced one that he was a man who had seen service upon the field of battle in earlier years for his hair was frosted with the silver threads that denoted the meridian of life.

The other was a youth of apparently twenty, and was strangely like the other in appearance, although his form was not as tall nor his chest as broad as his father's, for in that relationship they stood to each other.

Still the youth possessed the same strikingly handsome face, the same eagle eyes, and his mouth held an expression equally as firm and daring, although the lines of care and sorrow were not as deeply drawn, and the waving hair was black and long.

"This, then, is the home of the coast fishermen, father?" said the youth, again taking a wide glance around him.

"Yes, Ralph; and yonder bay is the rendezvous of the Conspirators.

"Behold how isolated the position, for the ocean bounds us in our front, and in the rear a barren waste of rock and water stretch for miles inland, making the place a perfect island, a spot that can be approached from but one point,

the sea, and the approach known to only the bold fishermen who live here."

"How many of them are there, father?"

"Fully three hundred souls, including their families, but of able-bodied men about ninety."

"And all devoted to your cause?"

"Ay, one and all of them, for from a poor set of wretches I made them live a different life; fed them, clothed them, built them fishing-smacks, and obtained for them a market for their fish."

"You observed how I was received when our yacht sailed into the basin? Well, do you not believe those men would follow my lead?"

"I do, sir; but is not the existence of this island known, or that is, is it not known to be a resort of fishermen?"

"The island is known to the Government, Ralph, and that there is a band of fishermen living upon the coast many know; yet, they are considered an ignorant and harmless set, and as such will be looked upon until their power is felt, which will be when I strike the first blow for the freedom of my native island, poor, suffering, down-trodden Cuba."

"But, Ralph, let me now tell you why I brought you here; let me tell you why I obtained for you a midshipman's birth in the navy of the free United States, and took you, when but thirteen, from your home to serve in a foreign service."

"With honor to yourself you have passed up the ladder of a naval career, and your ambition to rise higher in the service caused me pain at your withdrawal; yet, I urged it for a higher motive than you were aware of—that motive was that you should serve your native land."

"Thus, I wrote you to resign, and met you at Pensacola in my yacht, and brought you here, here to what I have named the 'Conspirators' Isle,' for here we are to plot the overthrow of Spain's power in our beautiful land of Cuba."

"Years ago, when but a mere boy, you asked me how I lost my arm?"

"You asked in what battle I had been wounded?"

"I will tell you now, for I would have you know what reason I have to hate Spain."

"I am a native-born Cuban, and such were my forefathers"

for generations, and our family is one of the grandest and most noble, on the island, in its lineage.

“When a young man, a mere youth, I entered the military service of Spain, and soon after was taken into the confidence of men high in authority, and they taught me the humble position that native Cubans must feel in comparison with Spaniards to the manor born.

“They taught me that Cubans were slaves and Spaniards were their masters, and the hot blood in my veins boiled to cast off the yoke of tyranny.

“On account of my noble family, and because I possessed enormous wealth, I was, although a youth, taken into the council of aged men, and we became *Conspirators*, and plotted to overthrow Spain's power in our beautiful isle.

“I was selected as the one to strike the first blow, which was to cut down from its staff the flag of Old Spain, upon a certain grand review of the Governor-General of the island, and believing that our plans were so well laid as to insure success, I struck down with my sword the hated ensign, thereby giving the signal for the uprising of our bands.

“What was my surprise and indignation to behold no movement, for a traitor had betrayed us, and all was known, but I, being upon the staff of the Governor General, no word could be given me not to make the attempt.

“Let me hasten on, Ralph, my son. I was seized, and my condemnation was rapid, for, cast upon a block, my right arm was severed from my body by an executioner, in punishment for my crimes, and then I was cast into the Moro's dungeons.

“One long year I languished there, and then I was taken out and banished from Cuba for the term of five years.

“I sought America, and it was while living there in exile I met and loved your mother, who you know was the only child of a wealthy cotton-planter, living near New Orleans.

“We were married, and the time of my term of banishment expiring, I returned to Cuba, and once more settled upon my estate, which was nearly ruined by neglect during my absence.

“A decree of the Governor-General made me a prisoner on

my own lands, and I was to be punished with death if I came to Havana.

"There I lived for years, happy in your mother's love and the love of yourself and sister, until death took from me my wife, and once again I became a plotter against the government of Spain.

"You I sent to the United States naval service, procuring you an appointment through the influence of your mother's family, as there I knew you would become an able officer and seaman, while your sister I kept ever near me.

"Being denied the freedom of my native land, I had my yacht built, and with a crew selected from these noble fishermen, was wont to cruise for days around the island, your sister my only companion upon whom I could bestow my love.

"Now the time has come to *act*, and the Conspirators are rife for rebellion; and therefore I have brought you hither, Ralph, and in your courage, ability and devotion to your native land, I place the greatest hopes."

The Cuban chief ceased speaking, and bent his look firmly upon the face of his son, whose lips became set, and his eyes bright, with the feeling of intensity that filled his bosom.

"Father, I thank you for your confidence in me, although from a boy I have known the sorrows that you have had to bear.

"I thank you, and thank God, I possess the ability to aid you, to help my poor, suffering compatriots, and with you I am ready and willing to become a Cuban partisan in the cause of justice;" and the youth grasped the hand of his father with a warmth that proved his earnestness in the conspiracy.

"My son, I knew you would act thus; but now let us descend to the beach, and there I will let you see the bold men whom I intend to place under your immediate command, and you will find them daring and thorough sailors.

"To-night, in the yacht's cabin, I will make you acquainted with all of our plans, strength and movements, and by remaining at the island some two weeks, you can be taught the advantages of the place as a rendezvous and stronghold, and fully understand, through the teaching of skillful pilots, the dangerous and circuitous channels that guard the approach to the little bay. Come!"

Leading the way adown a steep path, El Miralda, the Conspirator chief, was quickly followed by his son, and in ten minutes they stood upon a shelf of rock, jutting out from the beach, and forming a natural pier, or wharf, against which was moored a sloop-yacht of some thirty tons burden.

CHAPTER V.

THE VILLA BY THE SEA.

NOT very many leagues from Havana, and upon the south side of the island of Cuba, there now stand the ruined walls of a once handsome villa, situated upon a sloping shore that is washed by the waters of a small gulf.

Once the villa was the home of luxury and wealth, and its beauty was unsurpassed far and near, for there dwelt the family of Miralda, who proudly dated their ancestry back to the days of the Crusaders.

It was that villa that was the home of El Miralda, the Conspirator chief, and there he had dwelt since his return from banishment, in the happiness of his home and family, consisting of his American wife and two children, one of whom, Ralph, has already been presented to the reader.

But the Senora Miralda lived not long in her Cuban home ere death took her away, and the lonely Conspirator was left with his two children, to mourn the loss of the wife and mother.

It is to that home, the villa of El Miralda, I would now transport the reader, and at a period a month after the conversation between father and son upon the island of the Conspirators.

It is a warm and sultry afternoon, peculiar to the Tropics, and half seated, half reclining, upon a settee, nestled in a grove of palm and cocoa trees, is a maiden of apparently sixteen years of age.

The negligent position which she has assumed displays to perfection the exquisite grace and beauty of her faultless

form, while her face is darkly bronzed by the fierce heat of her native clime, and with its brunette hue, black eyes and heavy sweeping lashes, is in strange contrast with the sunny gold of her hair which in massive wealth falls in folds around her, having escaped from the imprisonment of a silver comb, made in the design of a crescent moon holding in its curve a single star.

A book, open, is turned down upon the maiden's lap, and her gaze is resting with interest upon the approach of a small sail that a few miles distant is rolling idly upon the waves, for not a breath of air is stirring upon sea or land.

Suddenly a puff of smoke bursts from the bows of the small schooner, and the roll of artillery comes across the waters and striking against the lofty hills echoes and re-echoes in rumbling tones.

"What can that gun mean?" murmured the maiden, as she arose from her reclining attitude.

"I will tell you, senorita," said a deep voice near by, and with a start the young girl turned and discovered old Marial, the head-servant of the Villa.

"Well, Marial, what is the cause—ha! there goes another gun," said the maiden, in tones soft and musical.

The old man said nothing, but turning landward pointed to the skies, which were rapidly becoming overcast with heavy clouds, while at the same moment the murmur of heaven's artillery was distinctly heard, and a bright flash of lightning darted across the sky.

"Why, I did not see that coming storm, for my gaze has been seaward; yes, they are calling for a pilot, to run in ere the tempest is upon them."

"Yes, Senorita Beulah, they want a pilot; but they call in vain," answered the old man solemnly.

"What! are there none to venture forth to save them, Marial?"

"No, senorita; your father took his whole crew with him, when he sailed in his yacht to bring your brother home again."

"True; and Marial, two months has my father been absent, and I am becoming most anxious regarding his safety," said Beulah Miralda, in her anxiety about her father and

brother, for the moment forgetting the danger of the little schooner.

"Never fear for him, lady; but see, another gun is fired for a pilot. Oh, that we could save them, for if the tempest strike them there they are gone, for upon every point do reefs surround the vessel."

"Can we not signal them to stand in—"

"And thus lure them on to their own destruction. No; many a sunken rock lies between yonder schooner and the land."

"Blessed Mercy protect them; for Marial, even though they are our enemies I would not see them perish."

"You mistake, Senorita Beulah; yonder vessel is a cutter, the armed tender of an American man-of-war now cruising along our coast."

"What, Marial? an American?" asked Beulah, with surprised pleasure.

"Yes, lady; I saw her flag, with a glass from the villa, ere the wind died away and left her helpless there."

"Oh, God, have mercy upon her poor crew. Quick, Marial; get thee to the villa and return with the spy-glass," and while the old servant hastened away upon his errand, Beulah once more turned her gaze, with renewed interest, upon the small schooner, which, having drifted with the tide much nearer the land, she discovered was a graceful vessel of perhaps thirty tons, carrying one brass gun upon her forecastle.

In a short while old Marial returned with the glass, and quickly arranging it for her vision Beulah leveled it upon the schooner, and without taking it from her eyes, said slowly:

"Marial, she carries one gun, and a crew of some fifteen men; besides the man standing at her wheel, and who appears to be an officer from his dress, I observe another pacing the deck, and from his bearing I judge he is her commander. Now he has stopped and is eagerly scanning the coast through his glass! yes, and giving an order—ah, I see, they are lowering the boats to tow the schooner landward."

It will avail them nothing, for ere long the storm will sink them, and then only luck will gain them an offing, for they are already land-locked."

"Marial, can you not pilot them in?" asked Beulah, with sudden animation.

"No, lady. I have often sailed out and in, in the yacht, but then I am no sailor."

In disappointment Beulah once again turned to view the movements of the schooner, unheeding the earnest warning of old Marial that the storm would break upon her ere she reached the shelter of the villa, distant some three hundred yards from the palm and cocoa grove.

Quickly a leaden light began to overspread the heavens, and then, like dense masses of black smoke, the clouds soared upward, shedding forth a strange, wild glare, which in the tropics is known as *el ojo del huracan*,* and whose fiery splendor mingled with the gloomy darkness was awful to gaze upon.

Still Beulah lingered, her face white with anxiety, her eyes burning with intensity as she bent them upon the fated schooner, whose guns still called beseechingly for aid from the land.

"Come, senorita; for safety you must fly to the villa," and old Marial laid his hand upon the maiden's arm.

"No, Marial; not yet, not yet! Oh, this is fearful! and God in heaven, thou alone canst save them. Ha!" and with a cry the maiden closed her eyes and covered her ears to shut out the glaring light and terrible roar of the tempest.

"*Por mi vida*, lady, but you *must* come," suddenly cried old Marial, and he seized the young girl in his arms, and at full speed bore her into the villa.

Hardly had they reached the sheltering doorway, when there came a crash, as if of a thousand heavy guns fired at once, a livid glare of light that lit up brilliantly earth, sea, and sky, and with a mighty roar, like the rushing of rivers of water, the tornado burst upon land and ocean, shutting out from view all save the warring elements immediately around the villa.

Within the villa, Beulah sat for hours, with the frightened servants crowding around her, and all listening to the howl of the tempest without.

Gradually the roar died away from the land, the winds lulled, and the tornado had passed on, and with thanks for

* The eye of the storm.

their preservation from the dangers that had menaced them, even in the strong walls of the villa, the servants had dispersed to their duties, and Beulah, with a cloak thrown around her, called to old Marial to follow, and once more sought the look-out on the hill, to see if she could discover aught of the little schooner.

"Ah ! Marial, I fear me they are doomed. Would to God it had been in my power to save them."

"Bless you, fair lady, for those words of kindness, and I would to God it had been in your power to save the noble men who are now at the bottom of the sea."

Beulah started at the voice, and saw before her a young man clad in the uniform of an officer of the United States Navy, for she knew it well, having seen her brother in the same dress a year before, when he was home on a leave of absence ; but, recovering her composure, she said :

"Thank Heaven you are saved ; but tell me if the schooner was wrecked ?"

"Yes, lady, and of her crew I alone escaped, by being so fortunate as to find a spar to cling to, for, with all on board, my noble little vessel went down beneath the hurricane."

"You were the commander ?" asked Beulah, with interest, gazing into the handsome, manly face of the stranger, and then for the first time apparently noticing that a stream of blood trickled from a wound in his head, and his hands and feet, which were also bare, were cut and bleeding, she continued :

"But pardon me for not before observing that you suffer and need care. Here, Marial, aid this gentleman to the villa, while I hasten on and have preparations made. Quick ! hold him up, for do you not see he is falling ?"

Marial hastily caught the sinking form, and raising the man in his aged but strong arms, he followed Beulah to the villa.

The young officer had fainted from weakness and loss of blood, but with careful nursing he, in a few days, recovered sufficiently to be up and out once more, and become the daily companion of his attentive and beautiful nurse, in her walks to the look-out on the hill, where she was wont to go to search for the coming sail of her father's yacht.

In that daily companionship Guy Granger, the shipwrecked officer, and Beulah Miralda learned to love each other with all the ardor of their passionate natures, and ere three weeks had gone by the young officer and guest told his love to the beautiful maiden, and learned with rapture, what he had hardly dared hope, that he was loved in return.

CHAPTER VI.

DENOUNCED.

HAD not Beulah been cheered in her tedious longing and waiting for the coming of her father and brother, it would have been a heavy sorrow to bear, for hope deferred truly does make the heart sick.

But Guy Granger, the young naval lieutenant, was with her, and his hopeful words daily gave her comfort, while in every way he endeavored to change the sad current of her thoughts, for poor Beulah had begun to think that the same hurricane that had wrecked the schooner, had also swamped the little yacht.

To divert her mind from melancholy meditations, Guy told Beulah of his own life; that he had a loving mother and sister in America, who loved him fondly, even though he had been away at sea ever since he was a mere lad, and he spoke with hope of the day when he trusted to present to those dear to him his beautiful Cuban bride.

Also he spoke to her of foreign lands, told her of many a bold adventure he had met with in other climes, and explained that the cause of his shipwreck was from being sent down the coast on a survey, while his vessel, the brig of war Dart, awaited him at Havana.

He had finished his survey of the dangerous coast, and was about to return, when, trusting to the knowledge of a Spanish pilot, his little vessel had been run on a reef, and so damaged that he feared he would be unable to reach Havana in her, as she leaked badly, and thus, in the midst of his trouble,

the tornado had burst upon the crippled craft, and sent her to the bottom.

Seated in the look-out one afternoon, just a month after the storm, Guy Granger had just made known to Beulah his determination to leave on the morrow for Havana, and with mingled joy and pain saw the great sorrow the unwelcome information gave her.

"Ah, Guy, do not leave me, for if my father and brother are dead, who else have I to love but you?" And the maiden threw herself with an abandon of grief into her lover's arms.

"Beulah, I leave you for but a short while. Remember, I am fully recovered now, and my duty to my commander, to my country calls me away, for as yet the fate of my schooner and crew are unknown.

"Yes, I must go, but ere long I will return and— Sail ho!" suddenly broke off Guy with professional abruptness, as his quick eye suddenly caught sight of a small sloop standing in toward the bay.

"Yes, 'tis the Beulah, my father's yacht," cried the maiden, who quickly dried her tears and glanced seaward.

Rapidly the little vessel came on, following each wind of the circuitous channel, and in half an hour after her discovery in the offing, dropped anchor beneath the shadow of the look-out.

A moment more and the boat grated upon the beach, and the tall form of El Miralda sprung ashore followed by Ralph.

An instant Beulah was enfolded to the broad bosom of the Conspirator chief, and then being released threw her arms gladly around the neck of her dearly loved brother.

A few words of explanation regarding the presence of Guy Granger, followed, and warmly was the young officer welcomed by both El Miralda and Ralph, after which the whole party started for the villa, the Conspirator telling Beulah on the way that he and his son had been detained at the Island by urgent affairs connected with their future plans, for the maiden was fully acquainted with the secret plotting of her father to free his native land.

When discovering the feelings of his daughter for the handsome American officer, El Miralda raised no objection to an

engagement existing between them, for he was at once drawn toward Guy, as was Ralph, by the generous nature and manly bearing of the young lieutenant; and furthermore, the chief was glad to have a man of rank in the United States service so intimately connected with him, as he felt assured he could greatly aid him in secret.

Finding, therefore, that Guy was anxious to return at once to his vessel, El Miralda boldly determined to go to the city with him, as he was most desirous of presenting Ralph to the secret members of the cause, then living in Havana, and two days after the return of the yacht to the villa anchorage, she set sail from the bay, carrying with her the Conspirator chief, Ralph and Guy Granger, while Beulah, as had often been the case before, was left at the mansion, with only the servants and old Marial to keep her company.

It was a bold and exceedingly dangerous deed for El Miralda to enter Havana, when he knew, if discovered, death would be his doom; but the Conspirator chief was a daring man, and did not fear to risk much to gain the ends for which he was striving.

It was night when the Beulah arrived off the harbor and pointed her bow toward the city.

Silently and swiftly she glided on, and at length dropped anchor in as secluded a position as could be found, and getting into the cutter, Ralph and Guy were rowed ashore, the former to seek the address of the secret committee, which his father had given him, with the desire that they should come aboard the yacht, and the latter to discover if the Dart was then anchored in the port.

Arriving upon the pier, Guy Granger unexpectedly met Grayson Trevor, an officer of his own brig-of-war, and his most intimate friend, and warmly was he greeted as if from the dead, for the little schooner had been reported lost with all on board.

Guy rapidly acquainted his friend with the circumstances attending his long absence from the brig, and learned that the Dart would leave at midnight on an expedition against a piratical stronghold in the Caribbean sea.

"And now," said Grayson Trevor, a dashing, gallant young officer, "you are just in time, Guy, for upon you will devolve

the command, as Captain Devoe is ordered to Washington on some special service, and I was left in charge; but I gladly resign now to you, for the joy at welcoming you back is worth more than the honor, I assure you."

Guy warmly thanked his friend, and then introduced him to Ralph, who stood near and had heard the whole conversation.

"You see I must leave you, Ralph; but in a very few months I hope we will meet again."

"Now good-by, and dearly do I hope that every success may attend your efforts."

The young Conspirator understood the meaning of his friend, for Guy had been taken into the confidence of the secret cause, and after a few more warm words of regard between them the two parted, the naval lieutenant to return to his vessel, and Ralph to slowly wend his way toward the rendezvous of the Patriots.

Ralph was warmly welcomed into the secret society of Conspirators, and El Miralda finding that the cause was rapidly ripening and approaching a crisis, determined to remain in Havana, while he dispatched Ralph back to the island to prepare the band of fishermen for the rising, and also look after the comfort and safety of Beulah.

Ralph sailed in the yacht for the Conspirators' Island, and placing one of their number in command, with orders to be ready to move at a moment's notice, he departed for the villa, and soon dropped anchor in the little bay.

But hardly had he been warmly greeted by Beulah, who smilingly reproved him for his long desertion of her, when a man, looking worn and haggard, and covered with dust, approached him, and said, earnestly:

"Is this the Senor Ralph Miralda?"

"Yes, my man; what can I do for you?" asked the youth kindly.

Taking from his girdle a letter, the man placed it in Ralph's hands, and quickly breaking the seal, the young man read the contents, while his face became almost livid from some hidden emotion.

"Good God! Ralph, has evil befallen our father?" cried Beulah, in agony of suspense.

"Who gave you this letter?" asked the youth, and his voice was harsh and cold.

"It was the General De Vega, and he bade me say, in case I had to destroy the letter, that all was lost, your father, the chief, was in the Moro, a prisoner," returned the man, with earnest feeling.

"My God! what a bitter blow! Poor sister, it has fallen heavily upon you," cried the other, as turning he beheld his sister in a deep swoon, for what she had heard had caused her to sink lifeless to the ground.

"How did it happen, *senor*? Tell me all," said Ralph, with strange calmness, after he had called to old Marial to bear his sister to the villa, and give her in charge of her maid.

"El Miralda believed himself secure in a disguise, *Senor* Ralph, and ventured forth upon the plaza, when he was at once recognized, and denounced to the Governor-General, who was near. A moment more and he was on his way to the Moro, guarded by a file of soldiers."

"Too bad, too bad; but he must not die; no, I will save him, or share his fate. Pedro," he cried, calling to the sailing-master of the yacht, "you remain at anchor here until you hear from me, for I depart at once overland to Havana, in company with this messenger.

"Marial, in your hands I leave the care of my sister, and I know you will be faithful."

"Yes, *Senor* Ralph; but the *senorita* has recovered from her swoon and would speak with you."

"I will go at once; and you, good Marial, look after the wants of this noble fellow, and then come to my room in the villa."

"*Si, senor.*"

Ralph sought his sister's chamber and found her in an agony of grief; but, bidding her be calm, he told her of his intention to start that night for Havana, and use every influence for the freedom of their father, adding, hopefully:

"As it can not be proven he was there for evil, the Governor-General may be instigated to pardon him; so cheer up, Boulali, and pray for my quick return, accompanied by our noble parent."

An hour after, well-armed and mounted, and accompanied by the messenger who had brought the fatal news, Ralph left the villa grounds and rode rapidly away upon the highway leading to Havana, his heart filled with hope, dread, and a thousand conflicting emotions.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ALLY IN NEED.

TOWARD the evening of the day following his departure from the villa, Ralph and his companion halted to rest in a palm thicket by the roadside.

With quick, nervous step the youth walked to and fro, unmindful of the beauties of nature around him, and the sweet-scented flowers he trod beneath his iron heel.

An hour more and he knew Havana would loom in sight, and not yet had he determined fully upon his course of action, and his brow was thoughtful and troubled.

Suddenly the sound of rapidly-approaching hoofs broke the stillness reigning around him, and not wishing to be observed, he was about to draw back into the seclusion of the forest, when a small cavalcade dashed by.

"See, Antonio, is not a woman in their midst?" he cried to his companion, who had suddenly crouched down quickly, and motioned to him to do the same.

"Hush, senor! Quick! conceal yourself, for those are the road bandits," excitedly exclaimed Antonio.

"Say you so? Then they mean mischief. Come, follow me to the rescue of yonder maiden," and with rapid strides Ralph reached his horse, threw himself into the saddle, and dashed away in pursuit of the cavalcade, which consisted of half a dozen horsemen and one horsewoman—the latter guarded between two men, who were rapidly urging on their horses.

Without looking to see if he was followed by his companion, Ralph rode swiftly on in pursuit, and gained quickly

upon the party in his front, who, he was assured, in their hasty flight, had not observed him.

A few more rapid bounds of his horse, and he would have been upon them, when one of the riders, glancing behind, discovered his approach and uttered a warning call of alarm, which was echoed by a cry from the female, in earnest, ringing tones, to save her.

Ralph drove the spurs deep into the sides of his straining steed, and raising his revolver took quick aim and fired upon the nearest horseman to him, who, with a half-uttered curse, fell headlong to the ground.

Another shared the same fate, and the next moment the youth held the bridle-rein of the maiden's horse, for Ralph noticed she was young and beautiful although her face was pale from fear.

"Release that lady's rein, Senor Robber," he cried as he caught a blow aimed at him by the man, upon the other side of the maiden's horse.

"He is alone; come to my aid!" called the man to his comrades in advance, who had started to fly, and he raised his pistol to fire upon Ralph, while he still kept on at the same fearful pace.

Ralph struck up the weapon, and at the same time he brought his rapier down with terrible force upon the head of his antagonist, who fell dead from his horse.

"Quick, lady, turn and save yourself, for the others are upon us," he cried, eagerly, as he endeavored to check the speed of the maiden's horse.

"And leave my brave preserver to be slain in defending me? Never, senor!" spiritedly answered the young girl; but as she spoke, and just as Ralph spurred forward to meet his three remaining foes, who were returning to attack him, Antonio dashed up quickly, and believing that others followed him, the discomfited robbers turned and fled, rapidly pursued by the Cuban messenger, while the young officer drew rein and approached the maiden, who in the meantime had brought her steed to a standstill.

"Lady, I congratulate you," said Ralph, politely raising his naval cap, for he still wore the undress uniform of an officer in the United States service.

"And I, senor, congratulate you upon your noble courage, which has saved perhaps my life, perhaps more; for I know not for what motive I was seized by the bandits. Senor, I owe you a lifetime devotion and gratitude," and the maiden frankly extended her small hand, which Ralph warmly grasped in his own, remarking, quietly:

"I rejoice to have been of service to you, senorita, but I observe my companion returning, so, with your permission, will see you safely to the guardianship of your friends."

"Thanks, senor; but here comes my father now, and his escort."

"Why, that is the Governor-General," faintly said Ralph.

"And I am his daughter. Does that dismay you, that your face changes color so?" said the maiden, laughing.

"No, senorita; and particularly glad am I to have been of service to the daughter of the Governor-General of Cuba."

As Ralph spoke there dashed up to the spot where he and the maiden sat upon their horses, a man of bold, stern face and noble form, dressed in the uniform of a Spanish General, and whose bosom glittered with costly decorations.

"Nina! Nina! my daughter! Once more I have you safe," cried the officer, as he wheeled his horse next the maiden's, and leaning forward clasped her in his arms.

"Safe, father; but it is to this gentleman I owe my safety, for had his courage not rescued me, ere this the bandits would have escaped to the forests with me a captive."

"It is terrible to think of; and their boldness in carrying you off, almost from my side, is unaccountable."

"Yes, father; but when you halted to hold converse with Captain Eugenio Basil, I rode ahead, and was suddenly seized and borne off by the bandits, ere I could utter one cry for help; but, senor, you forget the gentleman to whom I owe my rescue;" and Nina Camillo turned again to Ralph.

"True; pardon, senor, the oversight, in the joy of a father at receiving back his lost child. I observe you wear the uniform of an American officer, and I am still more honored in thanking a stranger and a foreigner for the rescue of my daughter," and removing his hat and glove the Governor-General, with a low bow, offered his hand to Ralph, who for a moment hesitated, and then said:

"Senor Governor-General, I am happy to have served your daughter; but, though I wear the uniform of an American sailor, I am a native-born Cuban—*my name is Miralda.*"

"Great God! can this be so? Yes," continued the Governor-General, speaking his thoughts aloud, "yes, he had a son educated in the United States navy, and—and—this bold youth is the one."

For an instant a dark frown rested upon the face of the ruler of Cuba, but quickly passing away, the handsome eyes brightened, and once more extending his hand, Don Camillo said:

"Young man, I do not intend to visit the sins of the father upon the son; but here is my hand, and as a friend I will receive you at the castle, whenever you will honor it with your presence— Hold! hear me through. Your course now lays to Havana, for doubtless the news has reached you, of the incarceration of your father in the dungeons of the Moro.

"Continue on to the city, and use there all your influence to save him, for by a fair trial shall he be set free, or condemned, as his judges may decide.

"Furthermore, come to my secretary, and you shall receive a free permit to visit him at your will—at present, this is all that I can say or do;" and again thanking Ralph for the service rendered to his daughter and himself, Don Camillo, the Governor-General, turned his horse in the direction of the city, and, accompanied by the beautiful Nina, rode away, but not until the maiden had warmly grasped the youth's hand, while a tear of sympathy for him dimmed the brightness of her soul-speaking eyes.

"Yes, this is a good omen, and I hope it will benefit my father," murmured Ralph, as he rode slowly along with Antonio at his side.

"And that beautiful being is the daughter of that vile man of blood. How strange that the good, the pure and the lovely must go hand in hand in this world with the wicked and the impure, for I have heard the nobleness of the senorita extolled as highly as I have heard the diabolical deeds of her father condemned.

"What a beautiful face and form she has, and how kindly

her beauteous eyes turned upon me! Ah me! I fear to see her often will be to love her, in spite of her evil father--

"Ha! I have it—lucky thought! I *will* visit the palace—I *will* mingle in Havana society, even though my father languish in a dungeon, and people talk of my unfilial conduct. Let them talk, and let the end show if I have forgotten that my heart is sorrowing while my lip is smiling.

"Yes, good Governor-General, I will take thy permit to visit my lonely father, and I will also accept thy invitation and visit the gay salons of thy palace, and there I much mistake if I have not a fair ally in thy noble daughter, in the duty I have before me. Come, Antonio, my good friend, let us on, for there is work before us in yonder hated city," and Ralph Miralda put spurs to his fleet steed, and rode on at a rate that brought him into Havana shortly after the shades of night had fallen upon the gay capital of the "Ever Faithful Isle."

Soon he found comfortable quarters in a fashionable hotel, and dispatched Antonio with the news of his arrival to the officers of the Conspirators' Club.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DEEP-LAID PLOT.

ACCORDING to the appointment he had made through Antonio, Ralph met the officers of the secret cause in council, and soon learned from them every particular regarding the arrest of his father, while at the same time he made known to them the circumstance of his accidental service to the Governor-General, through his daughter.

"This will avail you only as regards yourself, senor; but can be of no service to your parent," said an old man, who had served in the Spanish army with great distinction, but who, being a Cuban, was of course snubbed by the cavalier Government of Spain.

"I am assured of that, senor colonel; but it has already gained me the advantage of being able to visit my father in

the Moro, and this will be a great step toward planning for his freedom ; and now I would have you understand, senors, that, no matter what my conduct may appear to the outward eye, at heart I have a motive for my every action."

Thus having set the council upon their guard against misinterpreting his actions, Ralph wended his way to the palace of the Governor-General, and upon announcing his name, was bade to enter the gilded salon where the ruler held his private audiences.

Ralph entered the gorgeous chambers, and was surprised to find no one present ; but, ere he could think upon the matter, a door suddenly opened, and the next instant the Senorita Camillo stood before him, looking radiant in her becoming morning-dress, for the hour was yet early.

" Ah, Senor Miralda—indeed I am happy in greeting you, and being able again to bestow my heartfelt thanks. This is indeed kind of you, to call," and both hands were extended, and grasped Ralph's in a warm pressure.

The rich color flashed into the handsome face of the youth, as, bowing low, he said, softly :

" Lady, the pleasure is for me to feel ; but hardly did I dare hope to see you, as I called upon your father."

" Then I feel slighted ; but my father being absent at present, and I hearing the servant announce your name to the secretary, determined to see you myself."

" I feel the honor done me, lady ; but at another time I will call upon your father—"

" No, senor, you must await him now, for well do I know your mission ; but hold ! I will at once have the permit to visit your father given you," and touching a silver gong lightly, a servant appeared in answer.

" Bid Senor Garcia, the secretary to come to me."

" Si, senorita," and the liveried servant disappeared, to usher into the salon, a moment after, a small, sinister-looking Spaniard, who was the confidential secretary of the Governor-General.

" Senor Garcia, I would present to you Senor Miralda, whom, you may remember, yesterday saved my life."

The Cuban and the Spaniard bowed haughtily to each other, and the latter said :

"In what can I serve you, Senorita Camillo?"

"By at once writing a free permit, to allow this gentleman to visit El Miralda, the state prisoner, now in the dungeons of the Moro Castle."

"For one visit, Senorita Camillo?"

"For any number of visits it may be the pleasure of this gentleman to make."

"Your august father, the Governor-General, spoke not to me of this—"

"Do you hear me, Senor Garcia?"

"Si, senorita!"

"Then be good enough to prove it by obedience."

Without another word the secretary wrote the desired permit, while, in a tremor of joy at the power he discovered the young girl possessed, Ralph stood silently by, and then thanked the Spaniard warmly for his unwilling part in the performance.

Ralph then delayed his departure as long as he dared, for the presence of the beautiful girl was bewildering both his heart and brain, and then he took his leave, after promising Nina to be present at the Governor's *soiree*, to be held in a few days.

Armed with the precious permit Ralph drove rapidly to the Moro, and with alacrity the iron doors opened before the official seal of the Cuban ruler.

Out from the light of day, adown damp corridors, beneath stone archways, into the very bowels of the earth, the young man was conducted to the cell of the Conspirator chief.

The key turned creakingly in the huge lock, the door swung open with a harsh grating, and Ralph found himself within a damp dungeon, which the feeble light of day penetrated dimly through a long tunnel in the rock above.

The keeper then turned his lantern into the cell; a rattling of chains followed, and with a half cry of joy and of pain, the Conspirator chief sprung to his feet.

"Ralph! my son! you *here*?"

"Yes, father, but not as you believe, a prisoner," and slipping a piece of gold into the hand of the guard, which caused him to step outside the cell door, Ralph sat down

upon the humble cot, and made known to the lonely prisoner all that had transpired since their last meeting.

An hour passed and then he took his leave, promising to come again upon the following day, and to use his every effort to gain the freedom of El Miralda.

Daily did Ralph visit the lonely dungeon and commune with its unfortunate inmate, and together they plotted and planned innumerable means of escape, but without finding any one of them at all feasible in the carrying out.

Thus a week passed, and with a heavy heart the young officer wended his way to the palace of the Governor-General to attend the *soiree*, not only, however, because he had promised Nina so to do, but because the ruler had himself called at Ralph's hotel, and requested the honor of his company upon the occasion.

The gilded chambers of the palace were crowded with the grand and the beautiful of the city, but, as he entered, Ralph found himself the cynosure of all eyes, for he was at once pointed out as the son of El Miralda, and also his gallant rescue of the daughter of the Governor-General was the theme of every tongue.

Most gracious was his reception from Don Camillo, and warm indeed his welcome from the fair Nina, who, in full evening dress, looked transcendantly lovely, and was acknowledged by all as the most beautiful woman present.

From that night the son of the Conspirator chief and the daughter of the Governor-General were lovers, and the weeks that followed found the young officer a frequent visitor at the palace, where he invariably met the fair senorita.

Through the influence of Nina, El Miralda had been removed from his dungeon, to a comfortable cell, and the faithful son was allowed to send him many a little luxury.

With a strange inconsistency, the Governor-General, while hating from his heart the famous El Miralda, appeared to like exceedingly the son of the prisoner, and had, on several occasions, offered him important positions of trust under him, all of which, however, Ralph had politely but firmly refused.

At length the Governor-General determined upon purchasing a yacht, in which he could, accompanied by a few

select friends, make excursions of pleasure around the island, and speaking upon the subject to Ralph, and asking his advice as to the best American port to have one built in, the young officer informed Don Camillo of a vessel answering his desires, that he had seen building at Pensacola, for a gentleman of wealth, and suggested that it might be purchased for a fair price.

The description given of the yacht by Ralph, so pleased Don Camillo that he at once proposed to the youth to seek Florida and purchase the vessel for him.

Ralph's face flushed at the proposal, and his pulse beat quick, but conquering his emotion, he, after a moment's hesitation, replied: "I have nothing to keep me here, Excellenza, and will accept the mission."

"I thank you, my young friend. Buy the yacht at any price, for it would be months ere I could have one built. When will you leave?"

"Within the week, Excellenza."

"So much the better. When you are ready I will give you my private check for any amount necessary, and within the month hope to see you return successful," and so saying the Governor-General left the room, and Ralph and Nina were together.

"Don Ralph, you have some motive, and beyond my comprehension in accepting this mission," and Nina laid her hand upon the arm of the young man, while she gazed earnestly into his face.

"I have, lady."

"The motive is—is your father?"

"I would not see him die, lady."

"No, and you are right, Don Ralph; thank God my thoughts wronged you, for of late I had begun to believe you had forgotten the lonely prisoner in the Moro."

"Forgotten him, lady? Oh no; and yet in your presence one is excusable for forgetting himself."

"None of your flattery, Don Ralph, for you know we are too good friends for that—"

"And I love you, Nina, too dearly to flatter you: but of love I will not speak while the doom of death hangs by a thread above *his* head."

"You are a noble man, a true son, Ralph Miralda, and the world misjudges your conduct; but remember *I do not*, and if my feeble power can aid you it shall be freely given. *Adios.*"

With deep thought Ralph left the palatial mansion and sought his hotel, where he found Antonio awaiting him.

"Ha! my good fellow, you have just returned from the villa?"

"Si, senor."

"And how was my fair sister?"

"Well, but troubled in mind."

"I hope that trouble will ere long be banished: thanks, Antonio, for these letters, but ere I glance them over, I would have you depart at once again for the Villa Miralda.

"Seek there Don Pedro the master of my father's yacht, and bid him set sail at once for the Conspirators' Island and leave there the yacht, while he selects from the fishermen a picked crew of fifteen men, and with them I would have him go in a fishing-smack to Pensacola, and there await my coming. Dost understand, good Antonio?"

"Yes, senor, perfectly."

"Then at once be off; hold! bid the Senorita Beulah, I say be of good cheer. *Adios.*"

The faithful messenger at once departed upon his errand, and then Ralph, with a strange look upon his face, sat down to read over the letters brought to him from the villa.

CHAPTER IX.

A SON'S HEROISM.

WITHIN the stated time Ralph Miralda left Havana, and set sail for New Orleans, bound upon his mission for the Governor-General of Cuba.

After some delay he arrived at Pensacola, and was delighted to discover the yacht he had referred to had been launched but a few weeks before, and was then lying in the harbor,

complete in every particular, and fitted up with every comfort and luxury heart could wish for at sea, or on a pleasure cruise.

With a sailor's eye he glanced over the beautiful proportions of the vessel, noted the rake of the masts and the graceful curve of the low hull, and a smile of triumph crossed his face as he turned away to look up the owner.

After a short hunt the builder was found, and with surprised pleasure Ralph learned that the yacht was then for sale, owing to the sudden death of the gentleman who had ordered her, and with alacrity the young officer entered upon the purchase of the vessel, and in an hour the papers were drawn up, and Don Camillo became the owner of as graceful and snug a craft as ever skimmed the ocean wave.

As Ralph came out of the yacht's cabin, after the agent and himself had broken a bottle of wine together in honor of the purchase, a clumsy looking but light-heeled fishing-smack sailed by, and upon the decks stood Don Pedro and his picked crew of fishermen.

At the same moment the eyes of the Cubans and their young commander met, yet no sign of recognition passed between them; but, half an hour after, Pedro entered the hotel where Ralph was stopping, and the two were soon engaged in earnest conversation, the result of which was that the yacht, which had been christened the *Nina*, in honor of the fair daughter of the Governor-General, set sail the same evening, and rapidly flew away from the harbor of Pensacola, manned by the crew of sturdy fishermen from the Conspirators' Island.

After a rapid run the *Nina* dropped anchor in the harbor of Havana, and the Governor-General was the first man aboard, for he had noticed the approach of the beautiful vessel from the Moro's heights and had hastened to the landing.

"Eccellenza, never was there a vessel more easily managed or swift of flight, and the crew I obtained for her in Pensacola handle her like a charm," said Ralph, after Don Camillo had thanked him over and over again.

"Then I will keep them for my own crew, for I observe they are Spaniards; and, my young friend, I would I could prevail upon you to be the commander of my yacht."

"That is an honor I am compelled to decline," said Ralph, politely and firmly.

A week more and the yacht was armed and equipped, according to the wishes of the Governor-General, who, after a sail in the vessel, with Ralph, to show off her speed and seaworthiness, determined he could not get a crew more fitted for the duty; hence Pedro and his gallant followers were enrolled as the master and seamen of the Nina.

The days and weeks passed slowly along—slowly, indeed, to the poor prisoner in the Moro, and still no apparent effort had been made to effect his escape from his gloomy abode.

Before a rigid tribunal El Miralda had been brought and tried, and, in spite of the influence brought to bear in his favor, he was sent back to his dungeon, a man condemned to die.

From this decree there was no retreat; in vain were entreaties to the Governor-General to spare his life; he was firm in his refusal to interfere, and the day of El Miralda's doom was set and sealed, a second time condemned by the laws of Spain.

Again the palace of Cuba's ruler was ablaze with lights, for there were gathered the beauty and the chivalry of Spain and her "beautiful isle of the sea."

It was on the occasion of the seventeenth year of Nina's life, and all was a scene of joyousness, for the lovely maiden was most popular in Havana, as popular as her father was feared and disliked.

Suddenly the servant announced, in loud tones:

"Don Miralda!"

All eyes were riveted upon the youth, as, with pale face and downcast eyes, he entered the brilliant assembly, for in another week his father was to die in the public plaza, and each and every one wondered that the son of a condemned man could come there.

With stately tread Ralph sought the fair hostess, and bending low before her, offered kind wishes for many happy years to come, and then, with a calm manner, greeted the Governor-General—the man who had sentenced his father to death.

"Father, here, with the son of El Miralda, and on this,

my birthday, I implore you for the life of the lonely prisoner," suddenly said Nina, in low but distinct tones, while Ralph said, softly :

"Eccellenza, a son pleads for a father's life at your hands!"

"No, he must die," was the stern, unbending answer, and the Governor-General walked quickly away to mingle with the throng.

"Ralph, I will keep my word; meet me soon in the conservatory," whispered Nina, her face pale with emotion as she took the arm of Captain Eugenio Basil, of the Spanish cutter-of-war Magenta, and glided away.

Slowly Ralph walked from the gay saloon and sought the conservatory, and soon he was joined by Nina, who simply said :

"Come."

Following her, she conducted him along a dimly-lighted passageway, until she came to a door which she softly opened, and pointing within, said :

"Ralph, there is the desk of my father; no more need I say.

"God grant you may be successful, and, that one day we may meet again."

The young Conspirator essayed to speak, but his emotion choked back the words, and springing forward, he clasped the beautiful girl in his arms, and pressed upon her lips warm and passionate kisses, until, at last, she disengaged herself from his embrace, and quickly glided away.

Entering the room, Ralph sought the desk of the Governor-General, and a bright look of triumph flashed over his face as he touched a secret spring, and a drawer flew open.

A moment's search, and he took therefrom an official looking paper, with only the seal of state and the signature of the Governor-General affixed thereto.

"Yes, this is what I wish," he muttered, and seizing a pen, he rapidly wrote a few lines upon the paper, closed quickly the open door, and in a few moments was again in the conservatory, his face paling and flushing by turns.

Leisurely he sauntered through the salons, bowing here and there to those he knew, and receiving from many a cold

glance, for his seeming indifference to his father's fate was censured severely by numbers present.

At length, he walked into the broad hallway, and thence into the street, after which he pursued his course for a few blocks and turned abruptly to the left, into a small plaza, where a carriage stood in waiting.

"Pedro!"

"Here, senor," and the face of the sailing-master of the yacht looked from the carriage-window.

"Who have you with you?"

"The four seamen you sent for from the yacht—Arita, Bono, Anito, and Carlos."

"Good! here is the order for you to conduct the prisoner, El Miralda, at once to the palace of the Governor-General; so go immediately, and I will start for the yacht and have all in readiness for instant flight."

"*Si, senor*; all will be well;" and re-entering the vehicle Pedro drove away, while the young Conspirator walked rapidly on in the direction of the harbor, and after a short while came to a pier opposite which the yacht Nina lay at anchor.

"*Quien va?*" suddenly cried a voice in Spanish, and Ralph answered quickly:

"*Un amigo, camarada.*"

"*La Patria*," said the same voice.

"*La Libertad*," returned Ralph, and a man stepping from the shadow of a post said:

"Your voice sounded hoarse, Senor Capitan, and I did not recognize you."

"It is well to be on your guard, Delos; but all goes well, for Pedro is even now at the Moro with orders for the release of my father."

"*Eo verdad, senor?*"

"True it is, good Delos; but where is the boat?"

"At the pier head, Senor Capitan."

"Then I will at once board the yacht and have all in readiness. The boat will return here and await the coming of the chief and Pedro, for I do not doubt success."

"*Buenos*," answered Delos, who once more resumed his duty as sentinel, while Ralph sprung into the boat in waiting, and in five minutes more was on board the yacht.

A half-hour passed, and the watchful eye of the anxious son, who was so boldly plotting his father's escape, discovered the same boat approaching, and in another instant El Miralda stood upon the yacht's deck, a free man.

"Quick, Pedro, let fall the sails; Delos, slip the cable. There, she swings around, and feels the wind.

"Now, good vessel, fly with the speed of a bird from this hated harbor!" cried Ralph, and seizing the wheel, himself, he headed the sharp prow of the Nina toward the open sea, and in a few minutes the fleet craft was dashing the waters rapidly aside, as she clove swiftly through them in her daring flight from the power of a tyrant master.

CHAPTER X.

THE DISCOVERY.

DISLIKING to have the death of the Conspirator fall upon her father's head, as well as entertaining for the unfortunate man a feeling of the deepest sympathy, not to speak of her devoted love for Ralph, Nina Camillo had determined to aid the brave son all in her power, in the rescue of his father from death, and had informed him where the Governor-General kept the blanks, containing the state seal and his own autograph, and the manner in which the drawer was opened by a spring.

With perfect confidence in the noble girl, whom he had learned madly to love, Ralph had unfolded to her his plan of action, and showed to her a letter which he said would in a manner clear him from piracy in seizing the yacht, and which letter he was to leave upon the desk of the Governor-General.

The reader has seen how boldly and successfully the daring plot was carried out by the young Conspirator, which in the end was defeated by the treachery of Captain Eugenio Basil of the cutter-of-war, Magenta.

This officer was a man of thirty, dated his family back from the Flood, and having been so fortunate as to be a central heir, had been left immense wealth from the estates of numerous deceased ancestors.

He was a fine-looking man, large for a Spaniard, and to do him justice, was a bold and able seaman, for upon several occasions he had won promotion by his distinguished services.

The Governor-General looked upon him as a rising man, and having in his forty-fifth year, given up his bachelor life and married a distant cousin of Don Eugenio, he considered the man a relative, and certainly regarded him with special favor.

The mother of Nina being a distant relative of Don Eugenio, the gallant captain considered the beautiful maiden of kindred blood, and was not slow to take advantage of this circumstance in often seeking the palace and enjoying its inner social life, and thereby he had won some favor in the eyes of the daughter by often speaking feelingly of the nobleness of her dead mother, for the Senora Camillo had died when Nina was but twelve years of age.

Knowing, therefore, that Don Eugenio was the only one likely to enter the private library of her father, Nina had taken the naval officer under her *espionage* on the night of the escape, and delighted at the preference shown him, Captain Basil was only too happy to remain a fair prisoner, although half a dozen of his friends anxiously endeavored to lure him away to a game of cards in the anteroom.

Anxious that the captain and his daughter should make a match, the Governor-General saw with pleasure that night Nina's apparent devotion to her kinsman, and was congratulating himself upon the circumstance when an officer entered and said:

"Excellenza, the commander of the Moro has sent me with a guard of soldiers to conduct the prisoner back, fearing an attempt may be made to rescue him on his return to the castle."

"My good sir, you talk wildly; I know of no prisoner coming from the Moro—"

"You did not send an order for El Miralda—"

"Ho! the guard! No, *senor*; no order was sent. Hasten on with thy story."

"An officer, he who commands the private yacht, came with four soldiers and an order from you, and the prisoner went with them in the carriage."

"*Por Dios!* heads shall drop for this. Send Don Eugenio at once aboard his cutter, and bid him bring the yacht back or blow her from the water! Begone to the Moro, and signal the guard-boats to stop her, if she is not already gone; and, mind you, let the guns of the fortress sink her. Be off, sir!"

The rage of the Governor-General was now at a white heat, and with angry step he paced the room, his brow dark and eyes glittering.

"Father, dear father, tell me what has happened," and Nina laid her gloved hand gently upon the arm of the infuriated man.

"Happened! enough has happened, child—El Miralda has escaped."

"Escaped! why he was in the Moro," said Nina, with well-affected surprise.

"Well do I know that! Yes, he is gone, and guard, let the youth, the prisoner's son, be at once arrested! If the father is gone the head of the son shall answer."

"Father! *Excellenza!* is it *my* father who would do this crime?" and Nina Camillo drew herself proudly up.

"The young *senor* left the palace an hour or more since, *Excellenza,*" said a servant, approaching.

"Ha! there peals a gun, and another; yes, it is the Moro at work, and he may yet be taken, or slain.

"Fool that I was, to order the arrest of the youth, when he has been the one to plot this bold escape. Yes, and he has been aided by some one in my household. Well, sir, did you find Don Eugenio?"

"Si, *senor*; the cutter is already in chase of the yacht, which is now flying from the harbor," said an officer.

"Then she will be taken. Come, Nina, I would talk with you," and, offering his arm, the Governor-General escorted his daughter through the excited crowd, and entered the library which he considered his own private sanctum.

"Ha! what is this?" he exclaimed, as he discovered a letter addressed to him lying upon his desk.

"By Heaven! it is the handwriting of that young traitor. What says he?" and breaking the seal, the enraged man read aloud as follows:

"TO DON CAMILLO, Governor-General of Cuba:

"SENOR—To me you have ever shown only kindness and consideration; but to my father, El Miralda, you have exhibited only bitter hatred from the time when, twenty-five years ago, you had his right arm severed from his body, because it held a sword raised to strike a blow for freedom.

"In the Moro's dungeon, now a second time condemned, and to die within the week, lies a broken-hearted old man whom one word of yours could save; but you have refused that word, and hence *I act*, for I would not see my father die.

"Observing where your private papers are kept, I secured a blank with the seal and your autograph thereon, and myself wrote the order, which, if successful, will release the prisoner, and as a means of escape from the island, I take your yacht, the *Nina*, which, having secured for you, I well know her worth.

"That you may see my intention is not to rob you, I inclose my check upon your banking-house here, for the full amount of the yacht, with the improvements you have put thereon, and the money will be paid into your hands upon the presentation of the draft.

"Thanking you for the kindness you have personally shown me, I remain, Excellenza, RALPH MIRALDI."

"Well! if that is not a daring act, may the Angel of Death fly to perdition with my soul!" hissed, rather than said, the Governor-General, when he had finished reading Ralph's letter.

"It is respectful, senor, and he has shown himself honest," mildly said Nina.

"Yes, respectful; and honest, certainly, for he incloses a check for more than the yacht cost me; but, Nina, I am glad to know that none of my household are traitors, for do you know I suspected I had an adder in my heart, for I believed you had done this."

"I father?"

"Yes, my daughter; but, forgive my unjust suspicion, for his letter explains all; but he shall die if taken! Hark! listen to the guns of the Moro, and that rattling crash is the

bow-chaser on the cutter; but, as I live, that is not all the roar of artillery; no, 'tis thunder, and behold!" cried the Governor-General, as he drew aside the heavy curtain and glanced out, "behold, a terrible hurricane is coming on, and that daring man must face God's anger as well as mine."

Nina Camillo shivered as she glanced forth upon the war of the elements, and uttered a quiet prayer for the safety of her lover; but, glad to see she was now no longer suspected of treachery, well knowing if Ralph was taken it would give her more power in the future, she kissed her father affectionately and wended her way back to the salon, shuddering at each terrible discharge of artillery, and the crash of thunder that fairly shook the palace to its very foundations.

CHAPTER XI.

IN DURANCE VILE.

WHEN Lieutenant Guy Granger, the young commander of the American brig of-war Dart, saw the yacht approaching, he at a glance recognized who it was that held her wheel, and also knew the tall, cloaked form of the Conspirator chief; but the policy of the American officer was not to show his knowledge in the matter—not on account of his personal feelings, but as an officer of a friendly nation to Spain, and in a Spanish port his hands were tied, and he could not openly exhibit pleasure at an act of hostility to the Governor-General.

A week before, the Dart had returned from her cruise in the Caribbean Sea, which had resulted in the demolition of several piratical strongholds and the capture of three corsair vessels, and dropping anchor in the harbor of Havana, the officers of the brig had been *feted* and became the lions of society, for their gallant services soon became known.

Captain Devoe had been retained at Washington, and Guy therefore still found himself the commander of the brig, with every prospect that his late naval victories would cause his

promotion by his Government, and the retention of the Dart as its captain, for already had he sent on his report of his cruise.

But, refitting his vessel after her voyage had kept the young commander so closely confined that he had not had time to fly whither his heart called him—that is to the *Viila Miralda*, where, in her loneliness and anxiety for her father, brother and lover, dwelt Beulah.

True, Ralph had gone aboard the brig as soon as she dropped anchor, and had informed him of his sister's welfare, and also had given him to understand that an attempt would soon be made for the rescue of his father.

Thus it was that Guy Granger had allowed his officers to attend the anniversary ball of Nina Camillo, while he, only in a mood to enjoy his own thoughts, remained on board the Dart.

With the greatest eagerness, therefore, when he recognized that it was Ralph who had cut out the yacht of the Governor-General, Guy Granger watched her rapid flight, and rejoiced in his heart as gun after gun failed to make a target of the beautiful vessel.

"Well, Guy, what do you think of that for pluck?" asked Grayson Trevor, as he saw that the yacht had gone beyond the range of the Moro's guns.

"I think it the most daring act imaginable, Grayson, and God grant she escape the cutter also."

"Amen! But do you know I have seen that helmsman before?"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and—but tell me, Guy, was not that young Miralda, whom you introduced to me before we sailed for the Caribbean, and who dined with you the other day?"

"The helmsman of the yacht, Grayson?"

"Yes, Guy."

"Yes, it was Ralph Miralda, and the one who wore the heavy cloak was—"

"Ha! I know all now. That was his father, who, in some way, he has rescued from the Moro. Glorious!"

"You are a Yankee for guessing, Grayson."

"Then I am right. But behold the skies, Guy."

The young commander glanced aloft, and then quickly ordered :

“Boatswain, call the hands to furl close, and let fall the starboard anchor, for we are going to have a terrible blow ; quick, lads, or the storm will be upon you.”

Then turning to a cabin-boy, he told him to bring up his storm-coat and hat.

“And mine, too, sir,” called Grayson, and he remarked : “You are determined to remain up as long as you can learn aught of the chase, Guy ?”

“Yes, Grayson, and I will be glad to have your company ; and old fellow,” he continued, as he buttoned his storm-coat around him, “as we have been friends since we were middies together, I will place confidence in you, and tell you why I am anxious about yonder yacht.”

Glancing around the vessel to see that all was ship-shape to meet the tornado, and seeking the shelter of the weather-bulwark, Guy Granger made known to Grayson Trevor the story of his love for Beulah Miralda, and also told him all that he himself knew of the career of the Conspirator chief and his family.

When he had finished, Grayson said, fervently :

“I thank you for your confidence, Guy, and I trust God will guard the frail craft and bear her safely on through the danger of the tempest, and from the revenge of the Spaniards.”

“Yes ; ere this the hurricane is upon them ; but I thought I saw the yacht shorten sail before the tempest struck, while the cutter stood on under her press of canvas.”

“If the cutter did that, the handsome and wealthy Captain Eugenio Basil is now food for fishes ; but, Guy, what do you think of the old Governor-General’s daughter ?”

“I have never thought much of her, Grayson. She is beautiful, and I hear very lovely in character.”

“Yes ; strangely unlike the old sinner, her father, who behaved most shabbily in not pardoning El Miralda, when the son rescued the life of the fair Nina ; but the old pagan has doubtless never read Scripture regarding giving an ‘eye for an eye,’ which can be interpreted to giving a life for a life.”

"You interpret Scripture to suit your own arguments, Grayson," said Guy, laughing, and then he continued :

"Perhaps by *your* Scriptural reasoning the old Governor thinks it better to 'receive than give,' and hence will receive any favor and give none."

Thus conversing, the two officers and friends passed several hours upon the deck, and the storm having died away, and the moon once more breaking forth, they were about to descend to the cabin, when Guy's quick eye caught sight of a sail standing in toward the harbor.

"By heaven, the yacht is coming back. Look, Grayson, and see if that is not the Nina," and he handed his glass to the lieutenant.

"As I live, it is. What can it mean?"

"I do not know; but ere long we will find out, for she is beating in rapidly."

The officers now stood narrowly watching the coming vessel, for the density of the storm and the roll of thunder had prevented their seeing or hearing the burning of the cutter and her explosion.

Rapidly the swift yacht came on, eating up close into the wind, on each tack, and bearing a foaming wall before her bows.

From the deck of the brig the moonlight gave light enough to discover that the men were no longer at the guns, while a group aft were visible near the wheel.

Soon the news of the incoming of the yacht spread through the brig, and in surprise the officers and men crowded to the deck, and stood watching the white sails of the graceful vessel, as they flashed in the moonlight.

A half an hour more and she was standing across on a tack that would bring her directly under the stern of the brig, and with pale face Guy Granger stood gazing upon her approach, for he discovered that Captain Eugenio Basil stood near the helmsman, who was no longer Ralph Miralda.

"Great God! what evil has befallen them?"

"I can not understand it; but are you going to hail, Guy?" returned Grayson Trevor.

"No. Boatswain, pipe my gig's crew aft. Into the boat, men!" sternly ordered Guy Granger, and then, as the Nina

passed swiftly by, he noticed upon her deck the forms of the Conspirator chief and Ralph, in irons.

Catching his eye, Don Basil sprung to the quarter-rail of the yacht, and cried, sneeringly:

"Without *your* aid, Senor American, you see I have retaken the craft."

"Is it such an uncommon thing for a Spanish officer to do a bold act that he must publicly boast of it?" answered Guy Granger in a haughty tone, and one which he saw the Spaniard felt, for with a curse he turned away.

"Good! you hit him that time hard, Guy! The impudence of the fellow in asking you to stop the yacht as she went out, was an insult," said Grayson, who was delighted at the reply of his commander.

"Grayson, come with me into the cabin," returned Guy, and in twenty minutes the two reascended to the deck, the commander of the Dart carrying a small sachel in his hand.

"Now good-by, old fellow! Remember, keep all close, and in four days I will return."

So saying Guy Granger sprung into his gig and rapidly rowed ashore, arriving there just as Captain Eugenio Basil passed with his two prisoners, carrying them toward the Moro guarded by a squad of marines.

Guy watched them until they disappeared around a corner of the street, and then ordering his gig's crew to row back to the brig, he wended his way in the direction of the hotel where he stopped when ashore in Havana, just as the gray light of day began to pale the moonlight.

CHAPTER XII.

A BRACE OF VILLAINS.

THE morning following the flight of the yacht from the harbor, the city was in a state of chaotic confusion, and the daring escape of the prisoner, the bold act of Ralph, and the recapture by Don Eugenio was upon every tongue, for the

early papers had given a garbled account of the whole affair, and had stated that when the cutter had been dismasted by the gale, the gallant commander had taken to his boats and then captured the *Nina*, after a most desperate hand-to-hand encounter.

At the breakfast-table sat the Governor-General and Nina, a smile resting upon the face of the man, a sad look upon the countenance of the young girl, for the commander of the *Moro* had already sent word to his master that he had El Miralda safe again in his dungeon, with his son, and the crew of the yacht to keep him company.

"Strange that the boy has not already appeared to tell me of his bold recapture of the yacht; but, poor fellow, I suppose he is tired out," said the Governor-General.

"Or drunk—from joy," said Nina, quietly.

"Be still, girl; I will not hear you speak against Basil, for he is a splendid fellow, and likely one day to be—ah, here is the boy now! Captain, I am delighted to see you. Here, Nina, kiss your brave cousin after his gallant exploit."

"Excuse me, Captain Basil; I do not allow you any such honor," coldly said the maiden as Don Eugenio stepped forward to draw the rations the Governor had so generously offered to him.

"Well, cousin Nina, I will not offend; but, *Excellenza*, I obeyed the instructions brought me last night by your *aide*, and immediately went aboard the *Magenta* and gave chase—"

"Yes, and lost the cutter; but I will not scold you—go on."

"I hugged the chase as closely as possible down the harbor, and gained slightly upon her as she went to leeward of the American brig-of-war anchored there—and who, by the way, is commanded by a most impertinent fellow, even though he has done good service of late against pirates.

"I kept to the windward of the American, and hence lost no headway, and shortly after gaining an offing I opened fire—"

"Yes, you remember, Nina, we spoke of the crash of his guns?"

"You spoke of them, father."

"Well, it's all the same."

Nina did not see the matter as her father wished it, but wisely said nothing, and the Don continued :

"Yes, the cutter's guns had a rattling, metallic sound that made merry music, and yet, on account of the stiff wind and rough sea I could get no aim and only succeeded in pitching one shot through her decks, and another cut away her fore-topmast.

"But this did not check her, and ere I was aware of its approach, the storm burst upon us, for it loomed up astern, and our every glance was ahead, and away went every thing, for I had every stitch of canvas set. A number of my crew went overboard—"

"All right—all right, so you caught the prisoner," said Don Camillo, eagerly.

"So I thought; but the cutter was so strained, she leaked badly, and seeing that we must go down, I ordered signal guns of distress fired.

"Well, as we drifted on, rolling and pitching, I gave up all hope of the yacht, for we had lost her in the storm, when, suddenly, we descried her laying to, as snug as you please, and apparently enjoying our condition.

"As we passed her, the young Miralda hailed, and asked if we were in great danger, and I assured him we would soon go down.

"'Then I will keep near you; take to your boats and come aboard,' he cried."

"Said he that? Then he had some humanity," interrupted the Governor-General.

"*Some humanity, father?* Why, it was nobleness never surpassed!" cried Nina.

"I told him we had no boats, though we did have," resumed the officer, "and he instantly manned two and sent them aboard of us, though with great danger, and ordering them under my lee, I threw a dozen men in each and soon overpowered their crews, though not without sending some to the bottom of the sea, and unsuspecting, rowed aboard the yacht and seized her."

"*Nombre de Dios!* Eugenio, did you do so? That was indeed strategy," exclaimed the Governor.

"*Strategy!* Don Eugenio Basil, did you do the deed of

treachery you have just said?" and Nina, her bosom heaving, her eyes flashing, sprung to her feet.

"I seized the yacht, as I have stated," faintly said the officer.

"You seized the yacht through the humanity and nobleness of men who were saving your worthless life?"

"Out upon such base ingratitude, such cowardly treachery. And mark you, Don Eugenio Basil, never do you dare call me kinswoman again, or show your treacherous face in my presence!"

"Nina! my daughter! Senorita Camillo, what mean you?" cried her father, dismayed at the wild and angry manner of the maiden, who, unheeding him, walked quickly from the room, leaving the crestfallen and abashed officer silently looking after her. "Don't mind it, Eugenio; it is only her mother's spirit," said the Governor, soothingly.

"I don't like her mother's spirit," said Don Eugenio, and then, with a forced laugh, he added:

"Did she not give me the devil, though?"

"In truth she did; but she is like myself—she likes every thing done fairly; for my motto is: do every thing by fair means if you can, but if you can not, then use foul means; but truly the girl has spirit, and will make a good wife."

Don Basil looked as if he did not think that spirit of the kind he had just had a sample of was exactly the thing for a wife to have; yet he did not say so, but continued:

"You now know how it was the yacht fell into my hands, señor."

"Yes, and I suppose I must sustain you in the act; but the papers have it all wrong."

"Doubtless; they generally do; but, señor, if it is your intention to have the whole crew executed with El Miralca and his son, you know there will be no one left to tell about the affair."

"There's your own crew—"

"True; but their own desire for glory will keep their tongues quiet. You are aware, I suppose, señor, that the yacht ran down two of the harbor guard-boats, and a number of the men were thereby drowned; hence all the crew who supported the Miraldas are amenable for murder."

"You are correct; now I will give orders for the almost immediate execution of El Miralda—in fact, to-day at noon he shall die, and thus I will settle that matter; after which, the son, Don Pedro and the yacht's crew shall be tried, and doubtless death will be the portion of all of them. They are too bold and daring to live and plot against the Government—and myself. Yes, they must all die!" And bidding the naval captain *adios*, the Governor-General went out to give the order for the execution of the Conspirator chief, and then sought to conciliate Nina, for in his inward heart he felt that her indignation was just.

CHAPTER XIII.

GUY GRANGER'S MISSION.

UPON retiring from the breakfast-room in anger, Nina had entered the grand salon and started with surprise at the sight of an officer there, one clad in the American uniform.

It was Guy Granger, who, seeing the maiden, advanced, and said:

"Pardon, senorita; but I was told by the servant I would find here the Governor-General."

Nina had before met the gallant American, and often had Ralph spoken of him to her, and now she felt his visit was in some way connected with the recapture of her lover, and she replied:

"I will announce you myself, to my father, Senor Granger; but I fear me, would you plead for your friend it will be in vain."

"Lady, you are his friend then, and in you I will find a bold and able ally, for I have come to ask, as I am a United States officer, and look upon Lieutenant Miralda as also belonging to our service, why he was carried in irons to the Moro Castle."

"Senor, he is carried there to die, for I know that my fa-

ther will never forget his bold act—ah ! here is the Governor-General now.”

Don Camillo at this moment entered the room, and though surprised at seeing Guy, recognized him and extended a cordial greeting, while he said :

“ And how can I serve you, Senor American ? ”

“ By releasing an officer of our navy, now in the Moro—I refer to Lieutenant Ralph Miralda.”

“ True, he *was* in your service, senor ; but he resigned his commission a year ago, and having defied me and the laws of Spain, he is to be tried and punished for his act ; if found guilty, his life will be the forfeit.”

“ Senor, the son of Miralda I would see, for we are friends, and I would that you granted me that permission.”

“ Senor captain, the Conspirator chief, El Miralda, has twice before been condemned, and now upon him rests his third condemnation, and this very day he must die,” said the Governor-General firmly.

“ So soon, senor ? ”

“ Why not ? Once before he was sentenced and lost the arm that dared pollute the ensign of Spain, for his treachery ; again he was sentenced for breaking the laws and appearing in Havana, and for it he was condemned to die, and now for his last act, in losing Spain a cruiser and a number of brave men, I again sentence him to death ; this very day he is to die, for ere long I depart to the place of execution.”

“ Senor, you will not, I trust, refuse me permission to visit the father and son in the Moro ? ” asked Guy, earnestly.

“ What motive can you have, sir ? ”

“ That of friendship, for I know well both the father and the son.”

Camillo hesitated a moment and then said :

“ Captain Granger, in your last distinguished service in these waters, you have benefited my country too much for me to refuse your request. My secretary shall at once make out the pass for you.”

Thanking the Governor-General, and receiving his written permission, Guy took his departure the next moment, and was soon in a vehicle rapidly driving toward the Moro.

After a close inspection of his pass by the guards at the

entrance he was ushered into the dungeon below the castle, where he found in a small and gloomy cell, the Conspirator chief and his noble son.

"Guard, you can withdraw to the end of the passage, and endeavor to take a lesson in English by making out what is on this gold," said Guy, placing in the hands of the Spanish soldier several pieces of American gold, and the mercenary sentinel having withdrawn, the next moment Guy warmly clasped the hands of El Miralda and Ralph.

"This is noble of you, my brave friend, and I rejoice, now in my dying hour, to make known to you my last wishes, for well do I know that for me there is no more hope," and the chief wrung the hand of the young American, with much feeling.

"No, it were useless to attempt to cheer you with hope, for this very hour have I come from the presence of the Governor-General—"

"And he says—"

"That *you*, El Miralda, must die to-day."

"So soon? and yet, why put off the bitter end?"

"Yes, I am ready to meet death, come in whatever shape it may, though I had hoped to fall with the ring of battle in my ears, and the shout of triumphant Cubans to strengthen me for the long, long journey through the valley of Death; but of Ralph?"

"He is to be tried, senor, and if found guilty will die."

"Oh, God! this is terrible for you, poor boy."

"No, father, I fear not to die for Cuba, or to tread after you the path of execution," proudly answered the young Conspirator.

"My friends, it is of this I would speak, and I must hasten."

"For you, my poor friend, there is no hope, and I tell you so, that you may be ready to meet your fate; but for Ralph I trust there is a chance for life, and here I pledge myself to aid in his escape, for by that means only can his life be saved."

"To aid me I have a strong ally, and even now am I prepared to leave Havana for another."

"Ha, I see all; you would bring my sister Beulah to your aid," exclaimed Ralph.

"Yes, I would have her come to Havana, meet the daughter of the Governor-General, and between them I feel assured, your life may be saved."

"Saved, and my father lost? No, Guy, I will ask to die with him, for well I know that Beulah will have a noble protector in you. No, let me die with El Miralda."

"Are you mad, my son? Dream you not that by your escape I may be *avenged*?"

"No, I command you, as your chief, endeavor to leave these cruel walls, and then live to sow the seeds of hate, of disunion, of conspiracy, that in the end my poor down-trodden countrymen may rise, as one man, tear from their bowed necks the yoke of slavery, and plant their own banner upon our mountains to wave in freedom over our sunny isle, now accursed by Spanish power."

El Miralda spoke warmly, and gesticulating with his one arm, he rapidly paced the rock flooring of his cell, his whole frame on fire with the spirit that burned within his breast.

Then turning, after a pause, he continued:

"Ralph, promise me that should the bright sunshine of Heaven ever fall upon you once more, a free man, you will devote your life to the freedom of the island."

"I swear it, father."

"Enough! now, my young friend, a word to you."

"From my heart I now take the image of my only daughter, and into your care I trust her, well knowing that should her heart not break with the word that ushers the soul of myself and that of her brother, should he die, into eternity, you will be to her as father, brother, all that her poor stricken life shall need."

"I promise, senor," answered Guy, solemnly.

"God in Heaven bless you."

"Now one word more, and I am done."

"Say on, senor."

"I would that when the guards carry me hence to die, that you go with me to the place of execution, and there, when the pulse of life has ceased to beat, go to her whom we all love so fondly, and tell her how I died."

"I promise—ho, guard, what is it?"

"Senor, the soldiers are coming to lead the Conspirator forth to execution," said the sentinel, coming to the door of the cell.

"I am ready," quietly answered the chief, and the next instant the captain of the Moro, and a squad of soldiers appeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

TO DIE FOR ONE'S COUNTRY IS GREAT.

It was the afternoon of the day of execution—the day when the Conspirator chief, the man thrice condemned, was to die, and throngs of citizens of Havana hurried along the thoroughfares leading to the ill-omened ground where a Cuban patriot was to die, to suffer death by violence for the crime of loving his native land, and attempting the overthrow of its oppressors.

Thousands had assembled upon the ground, and with eager expectancy were awaiting the hour which should usher a brave soul into eternity.

To their gleeful hearts, for the Spanish race love cruelty and bloodshed, the minutes crept slowly away, but oh, how rapidly to the doomed man and those who loved him!

In massive lines the soldiers of Spain stood, drawn up in a hollow square, and at one side, surrounded by all the pomp and glory of his position, and with his Generals and *aides* around him, sat upon his steed, Camillo, the Governor-General, the man whose single word could save the life of El Miralda, but who would not utter that word.

Soon the sound of a muffled drum was heard, with the shrill notes of a fife rising low and plaintive, as it played a funeral march, and next followed the slow and heavy tread of soldiers.

In eager delight the thronging crowds of Spanish citizens stretched their necks, and beheld a squad of soldiers, preceded by a band, approaching, followed immediately after by

the tall and commanding form of the Conspirator chief, with Guy Granger upon one side and Ralph upon the other.

Behind them there walked two Spanish officers, with drawn swords, and next followed the crew of the yacht, with Don Pedro at their head, all loaded in chains, and with guards surrounding them, for the Governor-General was determined that his son and his followers should witness the death of El Miralda.

With proud step, and a fearless face, El Miralda walked to the place of execution, and no quiver ran through his frame as his eyes fell upon the instrument of death, the cruel Spanish *garrote*.

With astonishment all gazed upon the strange sight of an officer wearing the naval uniform of America, standing beside the condemned man, and then turned their looks upon Ralph, who, with as proud a mien as his father's, and a face, if any thing more livid, but with no sign of fear thereon, stood facing the cruel ruler of Cuba.

Suddenly, after a moment's low converse with Ralph, Guy Granger walked forward to the spot where sat the Governor-General upon his steed, and politely saluting him, he said :

"Senor, I come not to ask mercy for El Miralda, but from his son, who begs you to remember a favor done you by him, and in return let his father meet his death as a soldier, by the fire of a platoon, and not by the common *garrote*."

The brow of Camillo darkened, and he hesitated, while Guy continued :

"And, Excellenza, thanking you for your kind permission to me to visit my most unfortunate friends, let me also beg of you, with the son of El Miralda, that the brave man may die with at least the honors of war."

Still Camillo hesitated, and his brow darkening, as if in anger, Guy resumed, in a terse tone :

"Senor, you were kind enough to say, when I returned to Cuba certain property I took from pirates, who had long proved a scourge to Spanish commerce, that any favor I might ask it would be cheerfully granted. Now I ask that my present request be granted."

"Senor American, I will keep my promise, and the rebel

shall die in the manner you wish," at length answered Camillo, with a look and tone that endeavored to impress all with his mercy and goodness.

With a face, brighter at his success, Guy returned and made known to the doomed man what he had done, and from the noble patriot, as well as Ralph, received the warmest thanks.

The plan of execution was therefore immediately changed ; the hollow square of infantry opened upon one side, and upon the line vacated by them El Miralda was placed.

The orders of execution were then read aloud by an officer, and El Miralda heard, unmoved, the third condemnation that had been passed upon him, and the crowd looked with admiration upon a man who was not afraid to die.

" Senor," and the Spanish officer spoke with respect in his tones, for he could not but admire the doomed chief — " Senor, I must now carry out my orders."

" True ; in one moment I will be ready," answered El Miralda, and, turning to Guy, he said :

" In you, my son, is my hope for the happiness of my poor, poor daughter.

" Go to her at once, and tell her I died without a fear or regret save in leaving her to battle amid a cruel humanity. God bless you both, and farewell."

The lips slightly quivered, but the voice was unmoved, and the grasp of his hand firm, as he spoke to the young American, and then turned toward the brave crew that had aided him.

" My men, farewell ! Upon the very boundary of that other world I bid you be firm, when you come to stand, as I do now, for Spaniards will show you no mercy.

" And, my friends, though we are sacrificed, and the soil we love so well may rest upon our bodies years and years, yet there will come a day when this beautiful isle and her children will be as free as the waves that wash its shores. Be brave, be strong. Farewell."

A low moan of anguish escaped from Pedro and his men, but, unheeding it, the Conspirator chief turned and grasped the hand of Ralph, who was as unmoved as himself, though there shone in his eyes a certain dangerous light that was not in his father's.

‘ My son, remember all. More I will not say, can not say, for the time of my death is at hand.’

One long look into the eyes of each other, a strong, unyielding clasp of the hand, and the father and son parted to meet no more on earth.

Calmly motioning his readiness to the Spanish officer, El Miralda took his stand, proudly faced his executioners, and then, casting one quick, searching glance around him, resting for an instant upon the earth, the blue sky, and then upon the multitude, he waved his hand, and taking from the mouth of the Spanish officer the word of command, gave in his clear and ringing voice, the orders for his own death.

“ A peal of musketry, a flash, a volume of smoke, and El Miralda, the thrice-condemned Conspirator chief, sunk to the earth without a groan or struggle.

Instantly a hum of voices arose on the air, the bands struck up the national tunes of Spain, and the crowds of citizens and soldiers dispersed, perfectly satisfied with the day’s entertainment, and loudly cheering Camillo, as he dashed back to his head-quarters, followed by his staff of gay young officers.

The almost heart-broken, but outwardly unmoved, Ralph, with the other prisoners loudly lamenting, were marched back within the Moro’s walls, while Guy Granger stepping forward demanded that the body of the slain chief should be given him for burial.

Remembering the influence that the American appeared to possess with the Governor-General, and having no especial orders regarding the disposal of the body, the officer quietly acquiesced in the demand, and the remains of El Miralda were borne into Havana to the office of an undertaker and at the orders of Guy prepared for burial.

Just as the sun sunk to rest upon the same day, one of those cumbersome vehicles so common in Havana, following two horsemen, left the city’s gates and took the highway leading into the country.

In that vehicle were the remains of El Miralda, and the two horsemen were Guy Granger, and the Cuban messenger, Antonio, who having seen that the American was a warm

friend of the Conspirator and his son, had sought him out and volunteered to be his guide to the Villa Miralda, for there was the chief to be taken for burial.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DAUGHTER'S VOW.

"ANTONIO."

"Senor."

"You will remain and come on slowly with the body while I ride on to break the news to the senorita."

"Si, senor."

It was the evening following the one on which Guy Granger had departed from Havana, bearing with him the body of the Conspirator chief, and the walls of Villa Miralda were not far distant, when the young American put spurs to his tired horse and dashed on ahead.

Seated in the lonely arbor, where the reader first beheld her, was Beulah, the orphan girl, sadly gazing out over the waters, her thoughts turning upon those she loved in the city, and to him whom she then believed far distant upon his mission of danger, for the maiden had not learned of Guy's return to Havana.

Since the reincarceration of her father in the Moro, Beulah had lived in constant dread that his rashness, in adventuring into Havana, would bring upon him the penalty that she knew hung over him, and though trusting and hoping in her brother's power to release him in some way, she yet feared that a weight of coming evil, a foreboding weighed heavily upon her breast.

In loneliness she had remained at the villa, comforted by her faithful domestics, but yet longing for the consolation that kindred hearts could alone give.

More despondent than usual she sought her favorite spot, and seated herself in that half meditative, dreaming manner, when suddenly she was startled by the sound of a footstep

near her, and glancing quickly around she recognized the handsome form of her lover.

With a glad cry she was in his arms, and while strained to his bosom she could not see the look of deep sorrow resting upon his face, for rejoiced at his return, the absence of her father momentarily was forgotten.

"Oh, Guy, I am so, so happy at your return!"

"And I, Beulah, to be with you once more."

Something in the tones of his voice struck her, and quickly glancing up into his face, she saw there a look of sadness foreign to it, and with a sinking heart, while she leant heavily upon him for support, she said:

"Guy, you bring me evil tidings."

"Beulah, you have said that you were willing to forsake all else in the world and cling to me alone."

"And I repeat it, Guy; but why this strange manner?"

"Because, my little darling, I wish you to feel that you can trust me wholly, and look to me alone for comfort, and—"

"Oh God! quick, Guy, tell me; my father, my brother, what of them?" and with an earnest entreaty the maiden looked up into her lover's face.

"Your brother is in the Moro, Beulah."

"What! and what crime has he committed in the eyes of Spain's minions?"

"He attempted to rescue your father from prison, in fact succeeded, but treachery placed the chief and himself again in Spanish hands, and—and—"

"And what, Guy? Speak out, for I am brave now."

"You need all your courage now, poor girl, for, Beulah, you are an orphan."

"*My father dead?*" and the maiden's voice was low but terribly earnest.

"He died like a brave man, and by the decree of Camillo."

"And Ralph?"

"Now lies in the Moro condemned to—"

"*He shall not die—no, he must be saved!*"

"Yes, Beulah; that I have sworn to accomplish or share his fate; but, if you are strong and can bear all, now I will tell you, for you should know, and then be brave, for upon

you I place great reliance to aid me in the rescue of your noble brother."

"I will listen, Guy, I am strong; but oh my poor, poor father, how sad indeed has been thy fate," and seated by her lover, and with his arm supporting her slight, but womanly form, the sorrowing maiden heard all that the reader already knows of the daring attempt of Ralph to rescue his father, the escape from the harbor, the loss of the *Magenta*, the final capture of the yacht through the treachery of Captain Eugenio Basil, and the fatal ending.

With set teeth and tearless eyes, Beulah listened until she learned all the sad tidings her lover had to tell, and then said with deep feeling:

"Guy, God bless you for all you have done and are now doing; but do you know I feel that Ralph is not to die now, that he will yet live to make Spanish rulers tremble, and reap a rich harvest of revenge, for the Cuban blood in my veins pleads loudly for vengeance against those who have murdered my poor father.

"You ask me to become your wife, and I promise you to be such when you shall have rescued my brother from prison and I will aid you all in my power; but of our plans we will not now speak, for yonder I see the approach of—of—of my father's body."

Resting heavily upon his arm, the maiden walked forward with Guy and met the sad funeral *cortege*, and had the coffin borne into the villa amid the weeping and wailing of the humble servants, who all loved their master most dearly.

Through the long vigils of that lonely night Guy Granger and Beulah Miralda watched beside the bier of the deceased chief, and together they planned their course of future action, for the desire to rescue her brother from a like fate as that which had befallen his father, supported the maiden in her distress, and prevented her giving way to her deep grief.

Early the next morning the body of Miralda, the Conspirator chief, was consigned to a resting-place in the tomb of his forefathers, Guy Granger, in the absence of a priest, reading at the grave the beautiful and impressive burial service of the Episcopal church.

A shower of flowers fell upon the new-made tomb, a flood

of tears, and Beulah turned from the spot to seek the villa and make instant arrangements for her departure to Havana.

The home by the sea was closed and left in charge of an old and faithful servant, while Beulah, with old Marial and her maid, accompanied by Guy, departed the following day for the city to enter upon their plan for the rescue of Ralph from the dungeons of the Moro castle.

After a journey of two days the party arrived safely in Havana, and at the maiden's request Guy conducted her to the home of a distant relative, who warmly welcomed the young girl to her household.

Seeing Beulah was comfortably situated, Guy then with Antonio as his companion, went to the harbor, and hailing a small harbor wherry was soon on board the Dart, where he was warmly welcomed back by Grayson Trevor.

After the greetings of the two friends were over, the young commander asked :

"Any important news, Grayson?"

"None but what you know, for I saw by the papers you were at the Spanish murder of El Miralda, and in fact bearded the Governor-General until he granted your request to have the brave Conspirator shot and not garroted."

"Yes; he granted my demand."

"Strange he should have done that much; but there are two letters here for you, and both said to be important."

"I will see them;" and the two friends descended together into the cabin of the brig, Guy beckoning to Antonio to follow him.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TWO LETTERS.

UPON entering the brig's cabin Guy received the two letters that had come for him, and upon neither could he recognize the writing as familiar.

One was addressed in the bold hand of a man, the other

in a beautiful and feminine style, and marked "important and private."

Opening the former first, Guy read :

"ON BOARD YACHT NINA, Thursday.

"TO SENOR GUY GRANGER, Commander American Brig-of-War, Dart.

"SENOR—In pursuing the rebel Miralda and his renegade son, the other night, I passed near, and to windward of your brig, and in answer to my hail you were pleased to be impertinent in your reply, an impertinence I cannot brook.

"Again, upon my return, you once more repeated your impertinence, and hence I deem it my duty, as the insults were given me upon my own deck, and before my crew, to demand a full apology from you in writing.

"May God guard you many years, and may you believe me with distinguished consideration,

"Your humble servant,

"DON EUGENIO BASIL,

"Captain of the Spanish Navy."

"Well, Grayson, here is one of those highflown letters so common among Spaniards, that I would be glad to have you read," and Guy handed the epistle to his lieutenant, who, after perusing it carefully, replied :

"Yes, he accuses you of impertinence, forgetting he gave you the cause, and having heard, doubtless, some of his officers or crew laughing in their sleeves at his getting the worst of it, he deems it his duty to hold you to an account.

"Then he gives you to understand that it will be the worst for you if you do not apologize, and ends by bestowing God's blessing upon you, and assuring you of his distinguished consideration.

"Yes, this is good, indeed ; and your answer ?"

"I will write at once, and beg you to be the bearer."

"With extraordinary gusto, write it."

Laying his other letter aside, still unread, Guy took from his *escritoire* paper and pen, and wrote rapidly as follows :

"AMERICAN BRIG-OF-WAR, DART, }
Havana Harbor, Saturday. }

"CAPTAIN EUGENIO BASIL :

"SIR—Owing to my absence from my vessel your communication is just received.

"In answer, I would say that my words to you were called

forth by yourself, and I see no reason why I should offer an apology, and distinctly refuse to do so.

"Any further communications from you I am ready to receive, even though your base treachery, well known to me, in the capture of the yacht, should place you beneath the notice of any honorable man. GUY GRANGER."

"Here, Grayson, read this, and let me know your opinion."

"The very thing; I will at once don my best uniform and board the Nina," and calling away the third cutter, the gay lieutenant soon departed from the brig on his errand, while Guy, calling his steward, bade him prepare quarters for Antonio, whom, while in Havana, he desired to keep near him, for the Cuban knew the city perfectly and would prove most serviceable.

Being left alone then, the young commander took up his other letter, and breaking the seal, read:

"SENOR—Fully understanding the tie that binds you to the poor prisoner in the Moro, and assured of your anxiety to effect his release, I now address you, hoping you will pardon my boldness in so doing, when I assure you that I have the means of knowing that Ralph Miralda will certainly perish by the *garrote*, if he is not taken from his cell by the secret exertions of his friends.

"Feeling that you are ready and willing to do all in your power to aid in his escape, I promise you a strong ally, even though a woman, in myself, and beg that you will, upon the receipt of this letter, come to the palace of the Governor-General, and ask to see NINA CAMILLO."

"P. S.—I need not request that you hold inviolate this my bold communication to you."

"Noble girl, you are indeed a gem, and I wonder not that poor Ralph loves you, while he hates your cruel father.

"Yes, now the skies are brightening, and I see hope ahead for the life of Ralph Miralda.

"But then, I fear his noble nature will cause him to sacrifice himself unless his crew are also released, for his act placed them there, and we must plot some way to save them too.

"Well, it is a hard task, but then with two such *aides* as Nina Camillo and Beulah Miralda, what can I not do?

"Antonio?"

"Senor."

"I have received a letter that will call me ashore for a while, so when Lieutenant Trevor comes, beg him to await my return."

"Si, senor."

A few moments more, and, seated in his gig, Guy was going rapidly shoreward.

"Await me here, Mason, for I will be absent but a short while," he said to the gig's coxswain, and then he strode rapidly away toward the residence where he had left Beulah, Miralda.

He found the maiden in tears, for in her loneliness she could not keep up the calm self-possession she had shown during her journey to Havana, for memories of her slain father, her brother languishing in the gloomy Moro, broke her brave heart.

"Cheer up, Beulah, for I have come to you with cheering news, and there is every hope of an ultimate success," said Guy, as he entered, and he then made known to her his intention of at once calling upon Nina Camillo, and read to her the letter he had received, but carefully refrained from in any way alluding to the one sent him by Don Eugenio Basil, well knowing it would prove but another thorn in her side.

Upon leaving Beulah, who agreed with Guy that the daughter of Camillo would prove a host of strength in their plans, the young officer called to a passing vehicle, sprung in, and ordered the driver to set him down at the palace of the Governor-General, and during the drive there he could not but feel he was launched forth upon a deep and dangerous game, in his attempt to tear from the Moro's cells a prisoner of state.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DUELLO.

IF Grayson Trevor held hatred for any one, it was for a Spaniard, and thus he was rather glad than otherwise to be the bearer of Guy's letter, which he was well assured in his own mind would cause trouble.

Pointing the bow of the cutter—for he held the tiller-cords—across the harbor, he soon neared the yacht at her anchorage, and was hailed from the decks by one of the Spanish sailors, for, until a vessel then being repaired was ready for his command, Don Eugenio retained the *Nina* for immediate duty.

"I would see Don Eugenio Basil, senior," said Grayson, politely, as he went over the side.

"I will announce you; your name, senior?" pompously replied the midddy on duty.

"Lieutenant Grayson Trevor, of the American brig-of-war *Dart*."

The midddy disappeared and soon returned with a request for the American to follow him.

Upon a silken divan—one upon which the Governor-General was wont to stretch his cavalier limbs, reclined Don Eugenio Basil, in dressing-gown, slippers and smoking-cap, while he puffed away at a fragrant cigar.

"Good-day, sir; be seated," indolently lisped the Spanish captain, without rising.

The hot blood rushed into the American's face, and he replied:

"If Senor Basil is ill, I will excuse his position, but if not, I demand that he treat me with the respect due a gentleman."

"Ho! what mean you, sir?"

"Simply, that I am the bearer of a letter from my commander, Lieutenant Granger, to one Don Eugenio Basil, but as report calls that personage a gentleman, I deem I have

made a mistake in believing you to be the said individual."

The cool manner of Grayson was equal to his words, and in surprise the Spaniard arose from his recumbent position, and said, abruptly :

"I am Don Eugenio Basil ; what would you ?"

Without a word, Grayson handed him the letter, and having read it carefully through, he appeared wild with rage, walking the cabin rapidly to and fro, until the stern voice of his visitor recalled him with :

"Your answer, sir ?"

"My answer ? Tell your commander that I shall challenge him, sir ; tell him my second shall soon visit him, and then, sir, as soon as I have disposed of him, it is my intention to punish you for your impertinence."

"We Americans seem to be an *impertinent* race, senor ; but, joking aside, if Lieutenant Granger does not kill you, I will be only too happy to oblige your friends by doing so ;" and without another word Grayson walked from the cabin, sprung into his gig, and rowed rapidly back to the Dart.

Guy had not returned, but an hour after made his appearance and learned the result of his lieutenant's visit to the Spaniard.

Hardly had they finished discussing the matter when a midshipman announced a visitor, in whom Guy recognized Colonel Vaestro, an officer of distinction in the army of Spain, and one whom both of the Americans had before met, and admired as a most perfect gentleman.

"Colonel, I am happy to see you, sir ; be seated, please ;" and Guy offered his hand, which the Spaniard grasped warmly, and said :

"And I to see you, Senor Granger ; but my visit is a most disagreeable one, as I come from my friend, Captain Basil, who begs me to demand for him an apology for your language to him, or to grant him satisfaction in the *duello*."

"I have no apology to make to Captain Basil, please say to him, and with pleasure will I give him any satisfaction he deems necessary."

"Any arrangements, Colonel Vaestro, please make with my friend here, Lieutenant Trevor."

A few moments more and the Spaniard took his leave, having arranged a meeting for that very afternoon, at sunset, outside the city walls, and the weapons to be used, swords.

An hour of letter-writing, a half-hour passed in instructions to his lieutenant, in case of accident to himself, and the two officers, accompanied by the brig's surgeon, left the vessel, and were soon after dashing at a rapid pace toward the appointed rendezvous.

The Americans were first upon the ground, a lonely valley beneath two foliage-clad hills, but had not long to wait ere the Don, his second, Colonel Vaestro, and a lieutenant of his vessel arrived, and coldly but politely saluted them.

"Fielding, do you observe that the Spaniard is so confident of success and his own skill, that he has not brought a saw-bones with him?" asked Grayson Trevor of the brig's surgeon, when he observed no medical man attended the other party.

"So I see; I'll have to saw him up, and it'll be a big job, after Granger has done with him, for you remember when the pirates boarded us off Yucatan, I had several fellows to doctor whom the lieutenant cut down, and he always makes sad havoc with his sword;" and thus talking, the gray-headed man of keen knives and cutting saws, proceeded to coolly open his case of surgical instruments, ready for use.

While preparations were being made, Don Basil smoked a cigar in a most nonchalant manner, considering he had come there upon a matter of life and death to him; but then he was a superb swordsman—the best in Cuba—had never before met a foe worthy of his steel, and was astonished when Guy had chosen swords as the weapons to be used, for surely the American must have heard of his great prowess and courage.

As for Guy Granger, he walked apart, pacing to and fro, as though on his quarter-deck, and with a step equally as firm.

His face was pale, for well he knew how much hung on the issue of that meeting; but there was a settled determination in his look to punish the Spaniard to the extent of his ability, for he remembered his treachery toward Ralph and the murdered chief, and that it was that treachery had cost the Conspirator his life, and perhaps might bring ruin and death upon the brother of Beulah.

Then his thoughts wandered away to a sunny home, washed by the bright waters of the Chesapeake, and he knew that there, awaiting him, were mother and sisters, from whom he had long been absent, and who were watching for the return of the wide-sea wanderer.

Again he thought of poor Beulah, and he was nerved to iron, for if he fell, bitter indeed would be her lot, even though Grayson Trevor had pledged himself to do all in his power to aid in the rescue of Ralph, and take the maiden, in case her brother died, to that home by the Chesapeake.

"Guy, all is in readiness."

The young commander started, his face flushed, but conquering all outward emotion, he took his stand, tested the metal of his sword, and stood ready.

With a wicked gleam in his eye, at the word, Don Basil made a lunge as quick as lightning, that was as quickly parried by Guy, who, rousing himself to action, pressed forward with such vigor and skill that the surprised Spaniard was driven back, his sword beaten down, and the keen weapon of the American piercing his side ere he had time to rally himself into the idea that it was possible for him to meet his superior in the art of fence.

His sword dropped from his unnerved hand, his face became livid, and with a low moan he fell into the arms of Colonel Vaestro, who, alike with his principal, had been astonished at the skill of the American.

"My God! he will die, for his confidence in himself would not permit me to bring a surgeon," exclaimed Colonel Vaestro, as he let him fall back quietly upon the ground.

"No, sir; Doctor Fielding will attend to him, as he would to myself were I thus unfortunate; but I do not believe the wound mortal," said Guy, in his quiet tones, as he wiped his blade coolly and returned it to his scabbard.

"Yes, I will see him home, and do all I can," returned the kind-hearted surgeon, and having waved an adieu to the Spaniards and Doctor Fielding, Guy and Grayson rode rapidly back toward the city, leaving the others to follow more leisurely with the wounded man.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRONG ALLY.

WHEN Guy had called at the palace of the Governor-General to see Nina, he found her absent with her father at a military review, and having left his card for her, he sought Beulah to inform her of his disappointment, but intention to call again on the following morning.

Therefore, after he had breakfasted, the morning after the duello, he stepped into his gig and rowed ashore, where he found himself the cynosure of all curious eyes, for the papers had given an account of the affair, and, strange to say, had rather sided with the American.

Through the return to the ship of Surgeon Fielding, Guy also learned that the Don, though seriously, was not mortally wounded; yet, knowing well that a relationship of some kind existed between Nina and Captain Basil, he felt some hesitancy in again presenting himself at the palace.

Nerved, however, to risk everything to save Ralph, he determined to proceed, and with a firm voice asked the liveried servant to bear his card to the Senorita Camillo.

A few moments passed, and the servant returning ushered the young officer into a small but handsomely furnished room evidently the favorite apartment of Nina, for indications of her handiwork, with a guitar and the latest novels, existed upon all sides.

A moment only had he to wait, and then there came the rustle of silk, a light step, and Nina Camillo, radiant in her morning-dress, glided into the room, her face pale, but eyes sparkling beneath their long lashes.

"Senor Granger, you are welcome," she said, in pure English.

"I thank you, lady, for your kindness, especially after the offense I have committed in your eyes," said Guy, bowing low.

"To what do you allude, senor?"

"Have the morning papers not made known to you the meeting between your cousin—"

"Senor Don Basil I utterly disown as a relative. Yes, I read of your meeting with him, and that he was severely wounded, and feared that the circumstance would cause you to hesitate in coming, so was about to dispatch another messenger to you when your card was brought in."

"Lady, your kindness I sincerely appreciate, and thanking you for your confidence in me, would say that I am assured success will certainly crown our efforts when you are my ally."

"We *must* succeed, senor, for Ralph Miralda must not die as a dog to gratify Spanish hatred and pomposity. As you say, I am a strong ally, for I hold a position that will be most advantageous to us in our plans; but have you thought of what must be done in our plot?" and the maiden spoke unreservedly, though with a slight tinge in her cheeks, as if at her strange position.

"Lady, well knowing the usefulness of a woman's counsel in important matters, I sought the Villa Miralda, and the daughter of the Conspirator chief has returned with me—"

"Indeed! I have heard she is most beautiful, and have longed to send her some word of kind consolation; but I must see her."

"You may, lady, for here is her address. Yes, she came to Havana to aid me in her brother's rescue."

"Is she strong—has she the nerve to undertake a most dangerous part?" suddenly asked Nina.

"She is a fair counterpart of her brother, senorita."

"Then all will be right, and on the instant I have formed a plan."

"I am listening, lady."

Nina Camillo poised her proud head thoughtfully upon her hand for a moment, and then said slowly and in a low tone:

"Senor Granger, my father is now absent, having departed this morning for Santiago de Cuba, to be gone several days, and before his departure he discharged his private secretary from office, as he desires to sail to-day for Spain."

"Before you came in, there was a courier arrived with important dispatches, sent out from Madrid by a youth, Dio Varona by name, a nephew of my father, who was coming here to live, and if found capable was to become the private secretary of the Governor-General.

"The courier, the mate of the vessel that my young cousin sailed from Madrid in, not finding the Governor, asked for me, and from him I learned that Dio Varona, poor fellow, was lost overboard in a gale, and the captain of the ship having been ordered to touch at Havana, to land the youth and his dispatches, he had done so to inform my father of the loss of his nephew.

"Now I have in my possession all the dispatches given me by the mate, who told me that his ship was bound to Monte Video, and was only awaiting his return to sail; furthermore, a likeness of Dio, found among his effects, represents him as a young man of perhaps eighteen, with, strange to say for a Spaniard, rather light brown hair. Do you begin to comprehend my meaning?"

"I think I do, senorita. Please continue."

"No one knew of the mate's errand here, and hence no one will know of the loss of Dio Varona, at least for many months, and my father never having seen his nephew since he was a mere infant, can be readily deceived by another person impersonating him, especially when I can so instruct that representative of the lost youth in all the family matters in Spain."

"Lady, I understand you fully, and I give your woman's wit full credit. You would have Beulah Miralda impersonate Dio Varona?"

"I would, for it is the best means of saving her brother's life, as the position of secretary confidential to the Governor-General gives almost unlimited power."

"It is a matter of deep moment, for, should some ship arrive, bearing with her a person to whom Senor Varona was known—"

"Of that there is no danger, as my cousin has passed his life in a monastery, away from the world, and only left it to take passage for Cuba."

"The Senorita Beulah will consent; I know she will."

"Then there is every hope for the escape of Don Miralda, and his crew with him, for I fear me he would not depart and leave them behind."

"So I also believe, in fact know, for Ralph possesses a most noble nature."

"Then all is settled, for I will select from the baggage of poor Dio a suit of clothes, and carry it with me to the mansion where senorita resides, and she can return in the carriage with me, for it will be thought my cousin went from the ship to the home of some acquaintance; but, woe is me! poor Beulah will have to sacrifice her beautiful hair to play well her part."

"A poor sacrifice, lady, where it may be the means of saving the life of her dearly loved brother."

After a few minutes' longer conversation with the beautiful maiden, Guy arose and took his leave, wending his way in the direction of the home of Beulah, to make known to her the important and dangerous part she was to play in the game of life or death to Ralph Miralda.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

IN the cosy chamber of the palace, where Guy Granger and Nina Camillo had plotted and planned together, sat two persons, the third day following the duel that had so humbled the pride of Eugenio Basil.

One of those two persons the reader easily recognizes as Nina Camillo, superbly attired, and reclining with graceful abandon upon a silken divan.

The other was, apparently, a youth of eighteen, with a face strikingly handsome, and had it not been for a slight mustache it would have been called most womanly.

The hair was light brown, and hung in massive ringlets upon his neck, and the eyes dark, full of fire, and yet strangely sad in expression, while the face was of almost marble whiteness.

His form was slight, elegant, and graceful, and his suit of loose white flannel was neat, and most becoming to his figure.

At the time the reader is allowed a glance into the room, the youth is speaking, his voice low and full, as he says :

"If I pass the ordeal of meeting bravely, I have no fear for the future, cousin Nina."

"Dio, you *must* pass it bravely, for, were you to fail in this, all our plans would miscarry and Ralph would be doomed, for soon the tribunal will meet to try him for his life, and well you know, that in a Spanish court-martial, there is no justice shown, should the prisoner be an enemy to Spain."

"Well do I know it, *senorita*—"

"Ho, there it is again—forgetting I am *cousin* Nina to you."

"True; well, cousin Nina, it is hard for me to face (forgive me please,) the murderer of my father, and mayhap one who will also doom my brother to death."

"Hard I know it is, Dio, but you must nerve yourself to it."

"Remember all I have told you, and all you have read among the papers of the one you represent, and all will be well, for your position as secretary will give you great power, and soon you will be able to effect not only the rescue of your brother but of his brave crew, and then, once aboard the Governor-General's yacht, which by the way is your brother's for my father still holds the check left with him by Ralph, you can then spread her white wings and fly away to a land that is not accursed, as is this beautiful isle under panish rule."

"And you, *senorita*?"

"*Senorita* again—"

"Pardon, please; I had forgotten. And you, cousin Nina?"

"I? Why, I must be left here to think of you all by day and dream of you by night, even though thoughts and dreams are tinged with bitterness," said Nina, sadly.

"No; you need not remain, but come with us."

"It can not be; I am the daughter of the Governor-Gen-

eral, and I can not desert my father be he ever so cruel. He is good to me, Dio."

"Yes the tiger loves its young," cried the youth, fiercely, and then instantly changing his manner he continued:

"Forgive, oh forgive me, for I would not wound your heart, cousin Nina.

"But, come with us when we fly away; come, for Ralph loves you, and well do I know that you love him; come with us to free America, and there, in some sunny vale we will live in continual sunshine, for we will leave all gloom and sorrow here."

"You paint a lovely picture, Dio; but it can not be, for duty calls me here, and even though I sacrifice all I must remain—ha! be brave, be strong, for here comes the Governor-General."

As Nina spoke a volante dashed up to the palace front, and the ruler of Cuba sprung out and hastily strode up the broad stairway into the hall.

The next moment he entered the room where his daughter sat, and was welcomed most affectionately by her, while pale, but firm, and thoroughly nerved to the part to be taken, the disguised Beulah stood respectfully awaiting, until turning toward her, the maiden said pleasantly, and with a smile of triumph, as she noticed the easy self-possession of the supposed youth.

"Father, dear, here is one for you to welcome, my cousin, Dio Varona, and your nephew, who arrived the evening of your departure for Santiago."

"Indeed! Dio, my son, I am most happy to greet you, and am delighted to see what a brave looking man you have made," and then, with a dramatic tremor in his tones, and not unlike an old dame who sees a resemblance in every child to its dear departed grandfather, or some one else, he continued, as he held his supposed nephew at arm's length and gazed into his face:

"How like my poor deceased sister; yes, her eyes, her nose, truly a most remarkable resemblance."

"Yes, I am said to be exceedingly like my mother," replied Dio, in a voice wholly unmoved, a face perfectly calm under the scrutiny.

"Yes; but I must not exhume from the long buried past memories that crowd my heart full of sorrow, but let them rest," answered the Governor-General in an affected tone, and, as if by a seeming effort conquering the emotion he felt, he resumed:

"I am glad to see that you appear fitted for the service I need you for, Dio, that of secretary to me, and you must at once send for the tailor and have your uniforms made—"

"I have already anticipated you, father, in that, for I knew that Dio was fully competent, and ordered the uniform the day after his arrival," put in Nina.

"That is right, girl; you are always prompt, I see; doubtless you have already assigned him to quarters?"

"Yes, sir, he has the spare chambers in my wing of the palace."

"*Buenos!* It will keep him out of mischief to have your eye upon him.

"Well, now I must to my sanctum and look over dispatches, and Dio I will learn of your trip across, and how you left our friends, so come with me boy;" and so saying the Governor-General left the room followed by his new secretary, who walked with as bold and confident a manner as though he was really the one in whose shoes he stood.

Without suspicion the Governor-General inducted his supposed nephew to all the duties of private secretary, and was delighted at his aptness and decided ability in every task devolving upon him.

Furthermore, the ruler in a few days, appeared devotedly attached to Dio, and it soon became known that in a great measure Camillo was influenced by the youthful and clear head of the young secretary, who made it a point to thoroughly ingratiate himself into the favor of every official with whom he came in contact, and it was not long before his word was law among the household of the palace, and the state officers.

Thus two months passed, the plotters daily delaying the consummation of their plans to be sure of grasping success, and in that time the secretary had obtained an influence and power, second only to the Governor-General, who, with such an *aide* constantly at his right hand, became negligent of

many personal duties, leaving them to the youth, who appeared ever ready and willing to oblige his uncle, who would say to Nina when alone with her:

"My daughter, Dio is worth his weight in gold, I assure you, and there is not one affair of state that he is not as capable of managing as I am myself."

"Yes, he is invaluable," said Nina. Regarding his capabilities the maiden could but have a most exalted opinion.

In those two months the tribunal had met, and in spite of every defense, its sentence had been death upon Ralph Miralda and the squad of his brave followers who had been with him upon that fatal night.

But the sentence was not to be carried into immediate execution—the Governor-General, at the earnest solicitation of his daughter and secretary, granting a lease of life to the condemned of sixty days after their doom was made known, and wondering at this seeming kindness, and hoping, the young Conspirator and his crew lingered on from day to day in their lonely dungeon.

CHAPTER XX.

PREPARING.

For an excuse to keep his vessel longer in port at Havana, that he might watch events as they passed, Guy Granger laid the Dart up for repairs, of which she was sadly in need, and with delight eagerly viewed every movement of his co-plotters at the palace, well knowing that upon them depended the success of all their plans.

At length the brig was thoroughly refitted, and hauled out into the stream, preparatory to starting on a long-continued cruise in southern waters, and Guy felt that, ere long, he must act, when one day there arrived for him a budget of dispatches and letters from his Government and friends.

Glancing at the former first, he saw that he had been promoted to the rank of captain, for "valuable and distinguished services rendered," and was assigned to be the commander of

the Dart, as Captain Devoe had been ordered on other duty.

Also he was commanded to depart immediately upon receipt of his dispatches, on a cruise down the South American coast as far as Monte Video, and returning by the same route as far as Yucatan, head for the Navy Yard at Washington.

"Great Heaven! this will take me months, and I am ordered to depart at once.

"No; I must give it up. I must resign, and devote myself to the task of humanity that devolves upon me.

"Steward!"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Go and ask Lieutenant Trevor to come here, please."

A moment after Grayson Trevor entered the cabin, and showing him the dispatches, Guy said:

"Now, old fellow, you are to be the commander of the Dart, and must take her upon this proposed cruise, for this day I send on my resignation to Washington, and devote myself to the cause I have embarked in."

Arguments were useless, and at length Grayson yielded, though he disliked to lose his friend, even though the loss was his gain, and made him the Dart's commander."

"When will the brig sail?"

"To-night, Grayson. Now I am going ashore, and will ask for a pass to see Ralph, and while at the palace I will be able to have a conversation with Senorita Nina and Beulah, when we will decide upon some immediate plan of action, for I must not be left behind in Havana when the brig sails, as it would bring suspicion upon me.

"I will tell the Governor-General I have orders to sail, and would bid Miralda good-by, and he will give me the pass.

"Then poor Ralph I will learn the exact position of the island, where his friends, the fishermen live, and you can put me off there, and with a party of them, and in disguise, I can return to Havana and await coming events, for further than this my course of action is not decided upon."

"God grant you success, Guy, and also spare you from harm," said Grayson, warmly, and then the Dart's captain

departed for the shore, and soon presented himself at the palace.

The Governor-General was absent, but his secretary soon wrote the pass, and then Nina entering, the three held a long conversation regarding their proposed movements, and having decided upon a feasible plan the young officer took his leave and wended his way to the Moro.

Without a word he was admitted upon the pass of the secretary, and soon found himself in the gloomy cell where the lonely prisoner passed his days and nights in painful existence.

Paler and a great deal thinner than when he was imprisoned, looked Ralph Miralda, but upon his face rested the same indomitable courage and fierceness, the same defiance of cruel fate, as when he was a free man, and his eyes lit up with pleasure as he recognized his friend.

"Guy, this is kind of you;" and he grasped the hand of the American captain.

"It is cruel to have left you so long, but I would not bring distrust upon myself, so have kept away! but to the point, Ralph, for I have but a moment to remain.

"To-night the Dart sails on a Southern cruise, and Grayson Trevor commands her, for I have already sent on my resignation; but I go in her to the Fisherman's Isle, and from you I would get its exact position."

"I can do better, Guy; I will give you the address of a man living in Havana, who is our secret spy, and he will conduct you, for he was himself a fisherman and born there."

"Good; well, I will return with your men, or some of them, and I hope our plan will succeed, but of it I can not now tell you," said Guy, for he did not care to add more pain to Ralph's heart by making known to him that his dearly loved sister was there disguised, and acting as the private secretary of the Governor-General.

"I trust all to you, Guy, and God bless you."

"Well, hope on, and you must know that Beulah is well and sent her warmest love and sympathy, and so did the lady Nina, who bid me cheer you up for her sake."

"Bless her; bless them both; but Guy, as dearly as I would love to be free and breathe once more God's balmy

air, I will not escape and leave Pedro and his brave fellows to perish, for they, like me, are condemned to death, you know."

"When you go from these walls, Ralph, Pedro and his crew go with you; but now I can not say more, for my time is limited.

"Good-by, old fellow, and the God in heaven above grant that our next meeting be under more happy auspices."

Obtaining the address he needed, Guy Granger then left the Moro, and finding Antonio sent him to bring the man aboard the brig, as soon as it was dark, which duty the Cuban messenger faithfully performed, and the anchor of the Dart was weighed, her sails let fall, and under the pressure of a stiff breeze, and with Captain Granger temporarily holding command, she sped from the harbor of Havana, firing salute after salute to the Spanish ensign, which salute was answered from the frowning heights of El Moro in many a deep roar from her brazen guns.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DARING GAME FOR LIFE.

TOWARD sunset, one pleasant evening, a week after the departure of the Dart from Cuba, there sailed into the harbor of Havana a large and clumsy-looking coffee-drogher, that, under a light breeze, slowly headed toward a secluded part of the harbor, and in the direction of the yacht of the Governor General, which was quietly riding at anchor.

Indolently gazing upon the approach of the drogher were the three officers and twelve men who composed the yacht's crew, for the beauty of the sunset hour invited all to the deck.

Suddenly the sunset gun from the Moro broke the stillness of the hour, and ere its echoes had rumbled away land and seaward, there came a sudden hail of:

"Yacht, ahoy!"

"Ay, ay, sir. Come alongside!" cried the Spanish commander of the *Nina*, starting quickly to attention and duty, as he recognized, in the approaching boat, the graceful form of the Governor-General's secretary.

The next instant Dio Varona stood upon the *Nina's* deck, and was politely received by the commander.

"Don Torro, I would inform you that the Governor-General has the intention of using the *Nina* soon, so you must have all in readiness for instant departure."

"Yes, senor."

"As we desire a merry cruise, I have brought out with me some cases of rare wines; have them put in the cabin, and by the way, as to-day is the anniversary of my birth, I will give you and the men a few bottles to crack in my honor."

"Many, many thanks, Don Varona," and the Spaniard's eyes sparkled at the prospect of spiritual indulgence in some of the Governor-General's wines.

"Mind you, Torro, if you all get a little gay over your bottles, make no noise on deck, and don't be found drunk in the morning."

"No danger, senor."

"And— But what does that fellow say?"

The last remark of the secretary was occasioned by the near approach of the clumsy coffee-drogher, and a hail from her deck by the man at the helm.

"Ay, ay!" answered Don Torro.

"I would like permission to swing to your anchor by a cable, if you please," called out the drogher's helmsman.

"Swing to your own anchor, you lubber," cried Don Torro.

"We have none, as we lost it in a gale in running down from the plantation," politely replied the man.

"Then anchor to your—"

"Hold, Torro; he must not be insulted, for his request is most reasonable.

"Hail him, and let him fasten a line to your anchor-cable," and the secretary spoke firmly.

"As you say, Senor Varona. All right, my man; I grant you permission, but give us plenty of room."

"Thank you, senor; I will give you all you wish," returned

the helmsman, and springing overboard with a line between his teeth—for the drogher appeared to have lost her boat also—the man swam to the bows of the yacht, made the rope fast and returned to his craft, which, feeling the tide, and having lowered her huge sails, dropped astern of the *Nina* some ten fathoms, where she lay quietly upon the water.

“Now, Torro, I must return; but here is the wine for you and the crew.”

“Ay, ay, senior; and the Holy Mother bring blessings upon your head,” said the delighted Spaniard, as he ushered his visitor over the yacht’s side into the boat alongside, and watched his departure shoreward.

Hardly had the secretary’s boat disappeared in the gathering gloom, when Don Torro, his brother officers and crew diligently laid siege to the bottles left by Dio, and their contents soon warmed their blood with fiery heat, as bumper after bumper was dashed off to the health of the generous giver.

Thus an hour and more passed, and a deep sleep had fallen upon Don Torro and his crew, for not one man was there aboard whose wit had not gone out as the wine wen’ in.

Quietly, and in perfect darkness, the drogher had lain astern of the yacht for more than an hour, and then a tall form was seen upon her broad bow, and apparently satisfied, he hailed in voice sufficiently loud to be heard by any one on the *Nina*’s decks.

No answer came, and again he hailed, but all was silent, and speaking to men who were hidden by the high bulwarks of the drogher, he said in a low tone:

“Now haul in steadily and slowly, men.”

In obedience then there was a slight ripple of water before the bows of the drogher, which began to move and lessen the distance between her and the yacht, until soon her dark bulwarks overhung the *Nina*’s graceful hull.

Lightly the same commanding figure sprang aboard the yacht, and quickly following him were thirty dark forms, who crept silently into the cabin and steerage.

But no need of caution and quiet, for Don Torro and his crew were lost in drunken slumber, caused by the drugged wine they had imbibed, and ere long lay bound, gagged and helpless in the yacht’s cabin.

"Now, my men, open that large wine case, and let us see its contents," said the leader, who, though disguised as a common seaman, still shows the commanding form of Guy Granger.

In a moment the box was opened, and instead of bottles, a number of small bundles of clothing was exhibited, the uniform of a Spanish regiment that had come over from Madrid but a few days before, and been assigned to duty as the palace guard.

"Here, lads, twenty of you get into this rig, for you have got to play Spanish soldiers, and the remainder of you strip the crew of the yacht and don their uniforms; then put the Spaniards in the hold of the drogher," said Guy, and in half an hour there were upon the yacht's deck a number of men who appeared as her crew, and twenty more, with Guy attired in a captain's uniform, whom no one would believe other than a squad of the Spanish regiment they represented.

"Antonio, you remain on board of the yacht with four men, and the remainder of the crew will row us ashore; when they return get under way, leaving the drogher a small anchor to hang by, for I care not what becomes of her, and steer across to a spot near the water steps of the Moro, and there lay to until I join you."

"Ay, ay, senor; your every instruction shall be obeyed."

"See that it is, for one false move will cost us all our lives."

So saying, Guy Granger followed the soldiers—who had armed themselves with muskets from the yacht's armory—into the boats, which immediately pushed off and headed toward a lonely and unfrequented pier of the city.

At the landing, Guy sprung ashore, and was met by the secretary, who warmly grasped his hand.

"Is all in readiness Beu— Don Varona?"

"All; the Governor-General retired before I left the palace, and I have all passes, if my own personal word should be doubted; why, the men look like real Spanish soldiers."

"And you like a *bona fide* boy secretary; but, Senorita Nina—what of her?"

"We parted but half an hour since, and she is praying for our success."

"She would not come with us then?"

"No; I could not prevail upon her; but Guy, there is strange news in the palace to-night, known only to the Governor-General, Nina and myself, for it came by to-night's packet from Madrid."

"Am I to know what it is?"

"Yes orders have come from Spain recalling Don Camillo at once, as he has been given a most important position there, and his successor will arrive within a week, and the vessel that brings him will carry back Camillo."

"This is news indeed; then we are just in time. But come, we must not tarry," and dismissing the boats back to the yacht, Guy, with the secretary by his side, placed himself at the head of the disguised fishermen, and took up the line of march through the deserted streets.

Without halt or accident they arrived just at midnight, in front of the land entrance to the frowning Moro, and calling to the drowsy sentinel, Dio easily gained entrance for himself and followers.

Leaving the supposed soldiers and their officer drawn up in the plaza, the secretary bade the lieutenant in charge to conduct him to the commandant's quarters, and in ten minutes more he stood in the presence of the man who held the Castle del Moro under his immediate eye.

"Ah, my worthy Dio; a pretty time of night for you to visit this grim old home of mine," he said pleasantly, for the secretary was well known to him.

"Duty knows no sleeping or waking, senor; I come on a special and urgent mission."

"Out with it, and if you order, gladly I obey."

"Well, in two days the rebel Miralda, and his traitor friends are doomed to die."

"Yes, I know that well."

"But the Governor-General has heard rumors that a riot will follow their execution, and in fact that an attempt will be made to rescue them, for of late days numerous crowds of country people have come in and taken up their residence in the city."

"Say you so, Senor Dio? This is indeed worth talking about."

"Yes ; and determined that the conspirators shall die by the *garrote*, and anxious to prevent riot and bloodshed in Havana, the Governor-General has ordered me to convey the traitors on board his yacht, and run them to Santiago de Cuba, where they will be executed immediately upon landing."

"This will prevent the Havanese from witnessing the show but—"

"Yes, no doubt the citizens will be disappointed, yet when they know that the Governor-General acted for their good and the peace of the city all will be well."

"I hope so ; where is the yacht?"

"See ! from this window you behold her lying there, near the harbor stairway. Would you see my authority?"

"Foolish Dio, to think I would doubt you. No, let me at once summon a guard—"

"There is no need for that, as I have brought a captain and twenty men from the palace with me."

"*Buenos !* Our fellows are in luck in not having to turn out. Come !"

Leading the way, and closely followed by the young secretary, the commandant descended to the plaza, and ordering the supposed Spanish officer and his men to go with him, he entered the rocky hallway leading to the cells below, and after some moments reached the gloomy abode of Ralph Miralda.

The prisoner within heard the quick, firm tread, and his heart throbbed as he listened to the turning of the key in the lock.

"Come, my jail-bird ; orders for your removal," unfeelingly said the commandant.

Without a word Ralph Miralda arose, threw on his clothing hastily, and stepped into the passageway, where he was immediately handcuffed, and also ironed around the ankles.

A few moments more and the other prisoners, with Pedro, twelve in number, were brought forth, also ironed by the commandant, who delivered the keys into the hands of the secretary, whom he invited back to his rooms to have a glass of wine with him.

"Excuse me, senor, as I must hasten to get an offering be-

fore daybreak. You will see that the yacht is allowed to pass out."

"Certainly ; a pleasant voyage and speedy return," and the drowsy commandant turned away, as the secretary, having placed his guard upon either side of the prisoners, gave the order to move on.

At the harbor entrance stood a sentinel, but recognizing the secretary of the Governor-General, he stood aside, presented arms, and said, respectfully :

"*Pase usted, senor.*"

Saluting the guard, Dio passed through, his followers coming close after, and in a quick, loud voice he hailed the Nina.

"Ay, ay !" came the answer in Antonio's voice.

"Send the boats to the stairway for the prisoners."

In obedience to the order three boats belonging to the yacht soon grated alongside the rocky stairway, and into them soon sprung prisoners and guard, to be, in five minutes more, upon the schooner's decks.

"Senor, will you take command ?" and the secretary turned toward Guy Granger, who at once issued his orders in stern and low tones, while Ralph and the other prisoners were led below by Dio.

Like lightning the disguised fishermen sprung to their posts ! the sails were spread to the breeze, and in five minutes more the fleet yacht was bounding seaward under every stitch of canvas that would draw, and rapidly leaving behind the city of Havana and its frowning forts.

Conducting Ralph into the full glare of the cabin-lamp, the secretary turned toward him, cast aside the drooping hat he wore, and with a glad cry sprung forward, saying :

"My brother ! my brother ! Thank God you are saved !"

Like one in a dream Ralph looked on, his face flushed, his eyes lightened, and then, as if realizing all, he threw his manacled arms around his sister in one long, loving embrace.

CHAPTER XXII.

LYING IN WAIT.

SOME ten days after the scene related in the last chapter, a large and swift sailing clipper ship, bearing the Spanish ensign at her peak, sailed from the harbor of Havana and headed oceanward under a full press of canvas.

It was in the afternoon of a balmy day, and her passengers, a dozen or more in number, were standing upon her spacious decks enjoying the sea air, and glancing sternward to endeavor to trace some outline of the island they had left behind them.

"Sail ho!" suddenly cried the look-out, and in answer to the captain's question, "whereaway," there came the reply:

"Just off our weather quarter."

All eyes turned in the direction indicated and discovered a small sail that each moment increased in size, as it evidently bore down toward the ship.

"How rapidly she overhauls us, Excellenza. I believed there was no craft afloat that could sail thus after the *Isabella*," said the clipper's captain, as he turned to a military looking man at his side, in whom the reader will recognize Camillo, the late Governor-General of Cuba, who, in company with his daughter—whom he had not forgiven for her treachery toward him, in the release of Miralda, although she had confessed all and thrown herself upon his mercy—and Don Eugenio Basil, still pale from the effects of his wound.

"Yes, and there is but one craft known to me that has the speed of yonder schooner. See, Eugenio, what do you make of her?" and Camillo handed his glass to the Spanish naval officer who was accompanying the Cuban ruler to Spain, under the promise that the hand of Nina should be bestowed on him upon their arrival, for Don Camillo had determined to sacrifice the maiden to his own wishes, in punishment, so he said, for aiding the escape of Miralda, and originating the plot against him with regard to the disguised secretary.

Pale, defiant, but with an anxious look upon her lovely face, Nina stood by the side of her father, and awaited eagerly for the reply of Don Eugenio, who, after holding the glass a long time at his eye, said quickly:

“Senor, yonder craft is the Nina.”

“Ho! Senor Capitan; crowd your vessel with every stitch of canvas and escape yon craft, for there is life and death to me in your speed!” cried the ex-ruler, his tones anxious, and face livid, for he feared if overtaken by the Nina, which he did not doubt held Miralda, that instant death would be his doom, and well he knew his unmerciful career deserved it.

Aroused by the manner of the Governor-General the captain of the clipper crowded on sail, until his spars bent; but, all to no purpose, for rapidly the schooner overhauled the ship until but half a mile divided the two vessels.

“Oh! that we had taken passage in an armed vessel! Captain, we must resist!” but even as Camillo spoke, a puff of smoke came from the Nina’s bows, and an iron warning to come to rushed over the clipper.

“Crowd on, captain, we must resist!” cried the excited Spaniard.

“Impossible, Excellenza! I have but twenty men and two small guns; his decks are crowded, and he has four pieces of ordnance. Stand ready all to bring her up!” cried the clipper’s commander, as a second shot flew by.

Round swept the vessel, in obedience to orders, and in twenty minutes more a boat from the Nina came alongside, and with joy Nina Camillo recognized therein the form of the young Conspirator, Guy Granger, and Beulah, still attired in her uniform as private secretary.

Advancing to the quarter-deck the party politely saluted Don Camillo, and Ralph Miralda said in a firm voice:

“Senor, we have been lying in wait for this ship, not to rob it of treasure, but of one, who I hope will be willing to go with us.

“I refer to the Senorita Nina Camillo, whom I now offer the shelter of my love and protection.

“If she refuse, this ship shall proceed on its way undisturbed; if she accept, she shall go aboard the schooner, un-

der the protection of Senor Granger and my sister, until we reach an American port, where I can make her my wife."

"What say you, lady?"

With a cry of joy Nina sprung forward and threw herself into the arms of Ralph, while Don Camillo and Eugenio Basil stepped forward with drawn swords, the former crying:

"No, traitor! she goes with me."

"Yes, she is to be my bride," put in Don Eugenio.

"Never! Father, I renounce you now and forever! Don Basil, I would sooner die than be your bride!" and Nina drew herself proudly up.

"You hear? the lady has spoken, and I warn you not to urge me to violence, Don Camillo, for it is for your daughter's sake alone I now spare your life. Beware!"

Neither Don Camillo nor Captain Basil said more, and quickly Nina made her preparations to depart from the ship, which she did silently, although followed by the bitterest denunciations from her father and Spanish lover, upon herself, Miralda, Guy Granger, Beulah, and all Americans generally.

Quickly sped the boat back to the schooner, bearing its happy load, and away flew the beautiful craft over the water, pointing her sharp prow toward the sheltering shores of free America.

In good season the yacht Nina arrived in the waters of Chesapeake Bay, and dropped anchor before the home of Guy Granger, where all received a warm welcome from the family of the young American officer.

In the Granger mansion, Ralph Miralda and Nina Camillo, Guy and Beulah, were married, and they lived, having purchased estates near each other, in perfect happiness, surrounded by romping children, until five years ago the tocsin of war, of revolution, of resistance to Spanish tyranny, resounded through Cuba, when the two husbands left for the beautiful isle to offer their swords, and lives, if need be, to the cause of the patriot army under the gallant Cespedes.

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| 483 The Moose Hunter | 490 Captain Molly. May 10th. |

Published semi-monthly. For sale by all newsdealers; or sent post-paid: single numbers, ten cents; six months (12 Nos.) \$1.25; one year (26 Nos.) \$2.50.

BEADLE AND ADAMS, Publishers, 98 William St., N. Y.